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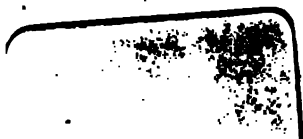




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A  
VINDICATION  
OF  
ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

BY  
JOHN INGLIS, D. D.  
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF OLD GRAYFRIARS' CHURCH, EDINBURGH,  
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IN SCOTLAND.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH; AND  
T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.  
MDCCCXXXIII.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE publication of this tract is not the consequence of any impression that the argument in behalf of Ecclesiastical Establishments stands in need of my aid, for the conviction and satisfaction of those who are well acquainted with the past and existing state of the controversy. Perhaps no argument, on a subject respecting which wise men have differed, was ever more triumphant than that by which the cause of ecclesiastical establishments has been maintained. It was, therefore, scarcely possible for me to entertain a hope that they who had perused deliberately, and yet in vain, either all, or nearly all, that had been writ-



ten in support of such establishments, were to be more convinced by such additional views of the subject as I should have it in my power to present. But it has appeared to me, notwithstanding, that such a statement and review of the argument as that which I now offer, is at present powerfully called for. There is ground to believe that, for a long time, the argument for and against church establishments occupied but a very small share of public attention. With the exception, it may be, of some dissenters, it is believed that very few, indeed, of the laity gravely considered it. The existing circumstances seemed to excuse them for neglecting it; there was nothing that seemed to endanger our ecclesiastical establishments, or bring them into question. But, in our day, institutions coëval with them are in the course of being changed or modified; and men are, in consequence, prepared to analyze and examine the principles and foundation of every institution, whether civil or religious. The enemies of ecclesiastical establishments are very naturally taking advantage of this state of the



public mind for accomplishing the subversion of institutions which they disapprove ; some men, whom the public had a right to believe friendly to the general principle of a church establishment, have recently expressed their opinion against it ;—and, in these circumstances, it seems to have become necessary that the laity in particular, who have been hitherto attached to an established church, be earnestly invited to examine its foundations.

What is proposed will, of course, admit of due attention being paid to any thing that can be regarded as new in the objections which are urged in the present day. It will also admit of my presenting such auxiliary views of the argument as have occurred to my own mind. And it is hoped that nothing can be understood as forbidding me to advert—assuredly not with a disposition to retaliate, but in the spirit of such self-defence as is consistent with Christian charity—to the attacks which have been recently made on the Clergy of that national church to which I have the honour to belong.



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# VINDICATION

OF

## ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION AT ISSUE,  
WITH A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS  
OF THE CONTROVERSY.

IT has been very generally regarded as indispensable, for the maintenance of true religion, that a particular order of men should be set apart for ministering to others in what concerns the interest of their immortal souls. The Divine Author of the Christian Faith, and his Apostles also under his guidance and direction, afforded in this respect an example, accompanied with corresponding exhortations, which few men have been disposed to call in question as a rule of duty.

The preaching of the Gospel and the administration of its ordinances being the more peculiar work assigned to this order of men, it has been very generally accounted necessary, for the maintenance of unity in the faith, that all and each of them should give some pledge for their own understanding or interpretation of the Christian doc-

trine being conformable to that of the particular society of Christians, in which they are to exercise their sacred functions. For this purpose creeds and confessions have been recognised, as standards to which men might appeal upon any points of doctrine, respecting which there have been conflicting interpretations of the language of Scripture; and a written acknowledgment of the authority of such standards has been required of those who were to be ordained to the ministry of the gospel.

As an additional security, office-bearers have been appointed, or ecclesiastical judicatories established, to which every minister of the word should be individually responsible for his stedfastness in the faith which he had once professed, as well as for his faithful discharge of all the duty to which he had solemnly pledged himself; and power has been lodged in such office-bearers or judicatories to cast off, or eject from his sacred office, every heinous or obstinate offender.

For the more perfect peace and good order of the church, as consisting of laity as well as clergy, these office-bearers or judicatories have been, at the same time, authorised to exercise a salutary discipline over all the members of their own communion.

But even these arrangements, which seem to be

all that constitute an ecclesiastical establishment *as unconnected with the state*, have not been accounted sufficient in themselves for upholding the visible church upon earth, and for extending its benefits equally to all those to whom the Great Head of the Church required that his Gospel should be preached ; it has been accounted necessary that the church should enjoy the protection and aid of the *state* for the accomplishment of its objects, and that, with this view, its ministers should be maintained at the public expense, instead of being left dependent on the particular congregations among whom they should exercise their functions.

What has been thus premised may perhaps be accepted as an *outline* of all that is essential to an ecclesiastical establishment. Various modifications of the system have been adopted for the purpose of accommodating it to the peculiar circumstances of different ages and nations. The peculiarities of these may be either right or wrong ; I am not to be understood as either approving or condemning them. In this publication I have no view to defend what is peculiar, even in that established church to which I have the honour to belong. It is only to the general principles of an ecclesiastical establishment that I solicit attention ; and, even in reference to these, I am willing to believe



that the discussion admits of being so modified as to be materially abridged.

Though the right of laymen, both to preach the Gospel and to administer its ordinances, is far from being renounced by some, they who maintain it, in the present times, have the merit of serving God in their own way, without disturbing others by any remonstrance against an opposite practice. In these circumstances, it would certainly be painful to enter, without necessity, into a discussion of what relates to them ; and it is hoped that the necessity of doing so may be superseded, in a way which will equally supersede discussion relative either to creeds and confessions, or to the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. For if it shall be shewn to be essential to the cause of religion that such a connection be maintained between church and state as may ensure to the church both the protection and the aid of the civil government, the basis of *independency* will be at once subverted, and the distinguishing tenets of independents, in reference to the particular points in question, will be found obviously inadmissible. In order to the civil government extending its protection and aid to the church, there must be mutual confidence between church and state. But how shall the civil government put confidence in the church, if it know not the men who have the charge of her

concerns—if there be no professional badge or characteristic by which they are to be distinguished from the great mass of society? Or how shall the civil government have confidence in the ministers of the church, if they shall not, by a declared adherence to some particular creed or confession, give the requisite pledge against their preaching and inculcating what might be subversive of the peace and good order of civil society? How shall the civil government confide in the church even for such an administration of her own concerns as may be conducive to the public weal, if she wilfully deny to herself the advantage of such an efficient jurisdiction as must be obeyed by all who belong to her communion?

Upon these grounds, it is conceived that the whole defence of an ecclesiastical establishment may be safely limited to a defence of the requisite connection between church and state, except in so far as a defence of its other constituent parts shall be unavoidably included in a defence of that connection.—It is against this connection, almost exclusively, that the adversaries of ecclesiastical establishments have directed their attack; in this respect, the field of controversy is of their own choosing; and, upon it, there is no disposition in others to decline such a contest as may be essential to self-defence.—But, in order to a more effectual

developement of the grounds and principles on which the determination of the case must depend, it will be useful to attend, in the outset, to the most material circumstances connected with the origin and progress of the controversy.

The objection to ecclesiastical establishments as connected with the state, is not of very distant or early origin. We can look back on the circumstances of the Christian world, and the opinions or sentiments of men respecting such establishments, before any opposition to them was contemplated. We can also look back—with assurance of not being deceived—on all the circumstances connected with the origin of that opposition, ascertain the credit due to its authors, and form an estimate of the events by which it was influenced, and to which it still bears a close and faithful resemblance.

It is well known that no objection was made to an establishment of the Church of Christ in connection with the state, at the time when such an establishment was first devised and carried into effect by *Constantine* the Roman Emperor. It was, on the contrary, hailed by the Christian world, as a blessed and glorious event.—Were the Christians, then, of that day altogether unqualified to detect, under the semblance of a blessing, what

were truly the elements of a curse? Whatever might be the imperfection of their discernment, it would be rather presumptuous to suppose that they deliberately approved of what was manifestly *unjust and iniquitous*;—a character which is now, without scruple, assigned to the leading principles of a church establishment.

During what are called the middle ages, the acquiescence of the Christian world in establishments may, no doubt, be ascribed to profound ignorance. But what account will be given of the undeniable fact—that, at the glorious era of the reformation, not a whisper was heard against the leading principles of an ecclesiastical establishment? It must not be ascribed to inadvertence; for the subject appears to have commanded attention. Respecting some points connected with it, the early Reformers differed in opinion. But even *Calvin*, while he insisted on *restricting* the power of the civil magistrate in what concerned the church, unequivocally left to him all that has now been laid down as essential to an efficient and salutary connection between church and state.

Shall it, then, be supposed that the great men, to whose learning and discernment—to whose judgment and energy—to whose independent and undaunted minds, animated by zeal for the glory of God—we are at this hour indebted for all the blessings which we enjoy in the communion of a

Protestant and Evangelical Church—Shall it, indeed, be supposed that they either failed to detect, or had not the courage to redress, such a grievance as that which is now said to result from a church establishment in connection with the state? By their exertions and influence, the whole fabric of the Roman Catholic hierarchy had been shaken to its foundation. So far as concerned those communities of the Christian world, with which they were immediately connected, their influence was almost unbounded; at the least, there cannot be a doubt that it was sufficient for the subversion of any institution which they could have proved to be either antisciptural, or degrading to the Redeemer's kingdom on earth. The previous support and maintenance of such an institution, by a tyrannical priesthood, who were deservedly become an object of abhorrence, would only have facilitated its overthrow. The history of the Christian church, from which the reformers had derived their knowledge of all its corruptions in doctrine and worship, was at the same time open to their view for enabling them to judge whether these corruptions were to be fairly imputed to any thing radically wrong in the principle of an establishment, or were not rather to be traced to an abuse of what was salutary in its nature, but, in the times of ignorance, perverted. Shall it be supposed that, in these circumstances, such men, as

we know them to have been, lost the opportunity of abolishing what was disgraceful to the cause of their Heavenly Master, oppressive to his church upon earth, and a grievous obstruction to the salvation of immortal souls? The supposition *is* made, and in one view fairly made ;—for all men are liable to err ; it is possible that even the men in question may have committed such an egregious error as that which is imputed to them. But, if we of the present day are to try the case, and to pronounce judgment on their conduct, we ought at least to proceed in the spirit of both caution and diffidence. In examining either all or any part of the question relative to ecclesiastical establishments, it becomes us never to forget that implied judgment of the case, which we have traced, on the part of men whom we have such cause to revere. We are not indeed to remember it for the purpose of being thereby restrained from the strictest investigation, but certainly for the purpose of being deterred by it from such rashness and presumption in deriving our conclusions as appear to be too natural to the human mind in such controversial discussions.

At what time, then, and how, did the controversy in question originate?

After such men as Luther and Melancthon, Zuinglius and Calvin, had detected and exposed

the corruptions of the church of Rome,—after they had laid a foundation for the deliverance of a great part of the Christian world from the tyranny of that idolatrous church,—after many of the princes of Germany had effectually aided them in their great enterprise,—after these princes assembled had employed the pen of Melancthon for preparing the well known *Confession of Augsburg*, which was adopted by the great body of the Protestants as a rule of faith,—after all these things, but before the agitation in the minds of men, excited by such a revolution, had subsided,—an opposition to ecclesiastical establishments manifested itself with a ferocious aspect, in connection with an opposition to all civil government that had been known in the world. “ There came to Munster” (says Dr Mosheim) “ a certain number of “ Anabaptists who surpassed the rest of that fanatical tribe in the extravagance of their proceedings, “ the frenzy of their disordered brains, and the madness of their pretensions and projects. They gave “ themselves out for messengers of Heaven, invested “ with a Divine commission to lay the foundations “ of a new government, a holy and spiritual empire, “ and to destroy and overturn all temporal rule and “ authority, all human and political institutions.”\*

\* Maclaine’s Translation of Mosheim’s Church History, Vol. iv. p. 103.

“ The origin of the Anabaptists” (says the same author) “ is hid in the remote depths of antiquity.” But no man can suppose the great body of this sect to have entertained, at any period, such extravagant fancies as are represented in the passage which has now been quoted. It does not appear that the celebrated *Wickliffe*, who lived in the fourteenth century, and to whose tenets many of the Anabaptists adhered, had given countenance to any thing so absurd, or had even expressed an opinion unfriendly to the leading principles of an ecclesiastical establishment.\* But it is not the less certain, that an opposition to such establishments, included as it had been in the creed of those fanatical men to whom we have referred, was soon afterwards maintained by many who bore the same name,† and that it constituted one of the tenets by which the whole class of men, who, in respect either of name or of principle, may be recognised as *independents*, made themselves conspicuous in England during the seventeenth century.

The dissensions which, during that time, prevailed, proved to be one of those cases in which an Almighty and All-wise Being has been pleased to bring good out of evil ; they led to an ulti-

\* See Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, Vol. i. pp. 3-5.

† Idem, Vol. i. p. 298.



mate settlement of the civil government of the country; more just and wise than that which had been contended for by either of the great conflicting parties. But, so far as related to the principle of ecclesiastical establishments—that modified principle for which alone we now contend,—there was no compromise on the part of its friends; the triumph of their cause was complete. With the advantage of returning composure and sobriety of mind, the great body of the public were satisfied that such establishments are essential to the interests of religion in the world. It may, indeed, be safely affirmed, without any disparagement to the opposite party, that the vindication of establishments had been ably conducted. But it is sufficient here to observe that, during the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the controversy on this subject terminated, and that the church was permitted to enjoy peace, without any violence being done to those who continued to differ from her in respect of either discipline, or doctrine, or worship.

In Scotland more particularly, it seemed very unlikely that the question respecting ecclesiastical establishments should be speedily revived. For the concurrence of men's minds on this subject was nearly universal,—more nearly so, undoubtedly, than could have been reasonably expected, respecting a point of such interest, about which

their neighbours in England had been so much and so recently divided ; and one remarkable proof of what is thus asserted will not be regarded as unimportant, in connection with those circumstances of a very opposite nature which now seem to call for a vindication of establishments.

Towards the middle of the last century, a few of the ministers of the Church of Scotland (respectable undoubtedly for talents, whether their opinions were right or wrong) seceded from the National Church, for reasons assigned at the time, to which it is not necessary here to advert. The reader's attention is requested to the single point—that these men proved their fidelity to the principles of an ecclesiastical establishment, in circumstances which presented every worldly inducement to forsake and abandon them. They knew well that, by their secession, they were to forfeit all the pecuniary maintenance which they had enjoyed as ministers of an established church, and were to depend, for their support, on the separate congregations that should adhere to them. They also knew that they were to forfeit whatever outward and worldly consideration they had, as ministers of religion, derived from the countenance of the civil government. Had they, in these circumstances, been capable of yielding to the influence of secular and worldly views, or to that spirit

of jealousy and envy which these views are so apt to nourish, it is obvious that they must have been strongly tempted to superinduce, on all their other objections to the National Church, a reprobation of that connection with the state, of which their ecclesiastical opponents were henceforth to enjoy the exclusive benefit. Yet, in circumstances so trying, they remained firm in their adherence to what they still regarded as the sacred and salutary principles of an ecclesiastical establishment.

In the standards of the church from which they seceded, it had been explicitly declared that “ The  
“ civil magistrate hath authority, and it is his duty,  
“ to take order that unity and peace be preserved in  
“ the church ; that the truth of God be kept pure  
“ and entire ; that all blasphemies and heresies be  
“ suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship  
“ and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the  
“ ordinances of God duly settled, administered and  
“ observed ; for the better effecting whereof, he  
“ hath power to call synods, to be present at them,  
“ and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in  
“ them be according to the mind of God.”\* It had also been declared, in these standards, as the import of Scripture, that the church ought to be  
“ furnished with all Gospel officers and ordinances  
“ - - - - - countenanced and maintained by the

\* Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. sect. 3.

“civil magistrate.”\* To these declarations, taken in their broadest sense, the original Seceders in their *Testimony* made no objection. “On the contrary,” (says Dr M’Crie, one of the most eminent of their representatives in the present day,) “the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, and Larger Catechism, was expressly approved and homologated.”† Accordingly, the same respectable author has proved decisively, from the writings of many of the original Seceders, that, as individuals, and in their state of secession, they still remained unshaken in their adherence to the great principles of an establishment, as maintained in the standards of the church from which they had separated. ‡

From these circumstances, it might, at least, have been hoped that the subject in question was not one about which the peace of the Church of Scotland was to be very soon disturbed. Indeed, no considerable body of men, maintaining opposite opinions respecting it, have withdrawn from the communion of the National Church in this part of the United Kingdom, since the time to which we have referred. But some of the late or

\* See Larger Catechism.

† “Statement of the difference” between the original Seceders and the new Testimony and other Acts of the General Associate Synod, p. 91.

‡ Idem, pp. 91–97.

existing representatives of those original Seceders, whose conduct we have traced as entitling them to such respect, have not thought it unworthy of the name they bear to take a zealous part in opposition to those principles which the founders of their own church had in this case maintained ; and the tone of discussion, assumed by one of these gentlemen,—though likely to defeat its own purpose,—leaves us in no doubt about either the result of the controversy to which some look forward, or the means which they are willing to employ for the accomplishment of their object. The author in question does not conclude his lucubrations without distinctly *threatening* the civil government of the country. “ If it fairly engage” (says he) “ in the contest, on this side”—the side of establishments—“ its existence is obviously staked “ on the issue, and that issue can hardly be long “ doubtful. The voluntary churches, with their “ friends, or those who would inevitably be their “ friends in such a conflict as we refer to, amount, “ we are persuaded, to full two-thirds of the whole “ population ; and besides the apparent equity of “ their claims, and the moral and religious improvements they wish to introduce, they hold out to “ the country the reversion of all the ecclesiastical “ livings in the empire as the reward of success. “ Their spirit too is as determined as their numbers

“are formidable.” - - - - - “In our country indeed (adds he) the employment of the sword is out of the question. The great majority of our soldiers and sailors belong to that very class of which our voluntary churches are chiefly composed.” \*

Such language cannot be misunderstood by those to whom it seems to be addressed ; but to them it can give no disturbance ; nor is it possible that others can be provoked by it to any reply but that of calm and dispassionate argument.

\* Ballantyne's “Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches,” pp. 310—313.

It is painful to advert to such language as proceeding from one who, so far as concerns this world, is no longer in “the land of the living.” It is hoped that Mr Ballantyne now enjoys the reward of much faithful service to his Heavenly Master, which had no connection with this or any other controversy. But this consideration will not supersede the necessity of advertiing, even more particularly, to some foul aspersions which he has unfortunately cast on the clergy of the Church of Scotland. If his character and talents be rated as high by the public, as they appear to be by some of his surviving friends, it is only an additional reason why such misrepresentations cannot be allowed to pass without notice.

## CHAPTER I.

## ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

SOME authors have been willing to rest the vindication of ecclesiastical establishments almost exclusively on the ground of public expediency ; and I have no hesitation in saying that, though it were not in our power to plead any other and higher authority, the vindication of such establishments would be triumphant. But it does not follow that, knowing them to be countenanced and supported by *Divine authority*, we ought either to be neglectful of this argument or to leave it in the back-ground. If it were not to be presented in that prominent view to which it is entitled, some might be inclined to suppose that it was abandoned as untenable ; and we should certainly deny ourselves, not only the strongest ground, separately considered, upon which any cause can be maintained, but also an important

advantage arising from it in the subsequent part of the argument.

It may be fairly pleaded that the light of nature, or the great principles of reason and conscience, which God hath implanted in man, direct us to respect and maintain ecclesiastical establishments as conducive to His honour in the world. If the light of nature call us to regard ourselves as the creatures of God, indebted to him and dependent on him for all things, it should certainly direct us to offer unto him religious worship and homage ;—and, if so, is it possible that it should not direct us, on fit and proper occasions, to present our worship and homage in such a way as may admit of every individual deriving countenance and encouragement from the example of his brethren around him ? Or is it possible that the individuals who constitute a nation,—connected as they are by so many endearing and salutary ties,—should not feel it incumbent on them to provide for the worship of God being maintained among them in their public and national capacity ?

Our duty in this respect to the great Being who made us is rendered evident in a way which wise men are not accustomed to disregard or treat lightly in any other case ;—there has been a general and practical acknowledgment of it on the



part of mankind from the beginning. Notwithstanding the corruption and degeneracy of the human race, and the idolatry into which they were thereby seduced, they never lost sight of their obligation—as communities or in their collective capacity—to provide for the worship of that Being, or those imaginary beings, in whom they supposed themselves to live and move. In the more enlightened communities of Greece and Rome, the laws for this purpose were both strict and efficient; and it will not be easy to prove that there was any nation in the ancient world, without some corresponding provision, according to its peculiar circumstances.

It is natural to suppose that, to the adoption of such a measure, the legislators of every community have been induced, the more strongly, by a conviction that religion in some form was essential to the good order and well-being of civil society. But this tendency of our Christian faith—its tendency to strengthen the hands of every civil government, in what is conducive to the public weal, constitutes a part of that argument for church establishments which depends on the principle of *expediency*, and will be presented hereafter with more effect, when viewed in its *direct* bearing on the great question at issue, than it

could be, in the meanwhile, as a mere auxiliary to the evidence for Divine authority.

I would therefore, without farther delay, invite the reader to consider—in the first place, that authority for ecclesiastical establishments which is derived from Scriptural example under the Patriarchial and Mosaic dispensations, and, in the second place, that which is derived from circumstances connected with the Christian dispensation.

## SECTION I.

ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS, DERIVED FROM SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE UNDER THE PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC DISPENSATIONS.

IN many cases, Divine example is an absolute and uncompromising rule of duty. But, for reasons which will appear in the sequel, the authority of example is not to be pleaded to this extent in the case before us; it will be found quite sufficient for the purpose in view that we have the authority of Divine example for ecclesiastical establishments, so far as the case from which the example is derived does not so differ from the case to which we would apply it, as to preclude a just and fair application.

What, then, are the cases in which Divine example may be looked for, as giving countenance to church establishments, before the manifestation of the Son of God?

The visible church of God upon earth has sub-

sisted in a variety of forms ; and, in the argument respecting church establishments, reference has been often made to the countenance which they derive from the Mosaic economy. But it does not seem less natural to look back on the circumstances of the church from the beginning—on its circumstances and condition under the patriarchal dispensation.

All the ways of God are consistent ; and the conduct of Providence from the beginning throws light upon what follows in its course. The notices which we have of what prevailed under the patriarchal dispensation are few and imperfect ; but they are not, on that account, to be lightly estimated. From the day when it was promised to our first parents that “ the seed of the woman “ should bruise the head of the serpent,” men have lived under a constitution of Divine grace, which, though at different periods developed and administered in different ways, has been at all times substantially the same. It would, therefore, be most unnatural to suppose that we may not fairly look back to the ways of God, even under the earliest dispensation, for such light as may enable us more safely to interpret his counsel and will in reference to any existing and similar case.

In the present case, indeed, there is one ground of no small importance, on which we may look

for guidance and direction to the patriarchal dispensation, both more naturally, and more safely, than to the Mosaic economy. For the patriarchal dispensation was, *in one respect*, more conformable than the other to the Gospel of Christ. There was nothing that unfitted it for being received and practically acknowledged *by all men* as the counsel and will of God. While it addressed itself to the condition of all men as guilty and sinful creatures, dependent on Divine mercy and grace, through a Saviour who should be thereafter revealed,—it prescribed no law, either ritual or moral, that could not be obeyed by all men. From its nature in this respect we might have supposed that it was intended for *universal* prevalence; and nothing but the defection and apostacy of men, or the indisposition of their hearts to conform to it, seems to have prevented such prevalence. It was, in this respect, a more perfect figure, than that which the Mosaic economy afterwards exhibited, of a religion which was to be ultimately preached to all nations. The *exclusive* tenor of the Mosaic economy makes some men hesitate in deriving conclusions from it respecting the question before us. Instead of looking to it as a consistent part of one great scheme of providence for the recovery of our fallen race, they are too apt to regard it as, in its nature and design, so little harmonising

with any other institution, as not to admit of their reasoning from it. But, from this embarrassment, we shall be entirely free in looking to the patriarchal dispensation. Considered in this view, the brief notices which are given us of what served to indicate the Divine counsel under that dispensation will be found of no small importance in their bearing on our argument. So far as it shall appear that the leading principles of an ecclesiastical establishment were in any measure recognized,—so far as we shall find even presumptive evidence to this effect, it cannot be uninteresting. But if the evidence to be adduced shall not be rejected without a patient and candid examination, it is hoped that it will not be found either weak or indecisive.

It is well known that, in the history of the patriarchal dispensation,—as contained in the book of Genesis,—there is a very interesting notice of a person under the name of *Melchisedek*; and it will scarcely be denied that the mysterious imaginations respecting this individual have been so refuted and exploded, as to supersede all objection to our speaking of him as a mere man, invested with the character and functions which in the language of scripture are ascribed to him. But if any reader entertain a doubt upon this point, it is hoped that

he will take the trouble to peruse the annexed note.\*

\* The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when speaking of Melchisedek, with a peculiar reference to the nature of his priesthood, represents him as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually;" and, again, as one "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

This language, if understood literally, or without an exclusive and figurative reference to the nature of Melchisedek's priesthood, as a type of the priestly office of Christ, would certainly preclude our regarding him as a mortal being; and it has, therefore, been imagined that he was an *angel*, if not *one of the persons of the blessed Trinity*. But the fallacy of this supposition is placed beyond a doubt. For, in the first place, the Apostle, in the same passage, speaks of Melchisedek as *a man*, "Now consider (says he) how great *this man* was;" and, in the second place, the whole tenor of New Testament Scripture proceeds upon an understanding that every high priest ordained for men must be "taken from among men."

It is, in these circumstances, impossible to suppose that the priest *Melchisedek* could be any other than a man, unless we could suppose that, as either an angelic or a divine being, he had taken our nature upon him, in order to his being qualified for the priestly office, just as the Son of God became a man in the fulness of time.—Perhaps there are no limits to what some may suppose; but such a supposition will scarcely be resorted to, if what is peculiar in the account given of Melchisedek admit of a different explanation.

When the Apostle represented Melchisedek as "without father, without mother, without descent," it was in the course of an argument respecting the Jewish priests, whose descent was counted from Aaron, and for whose priesthood it was indispen-

Philo the Jew refers to Melchisedek as having been a king, and not a tyrant ; and, in the

sable that they should be able to trace their pedigree to Aaron. For the purpose, therefore, of *contrasting* their condition with that of Melchisedek, the Apostle reminds the Hebrews that the Scriptures, by leaving us entirely ignorant even of the *name* of Melchisedek's father, had left us to regard himself, in his office of a priest, as *virtually* without a father, and *literally* without any priestly descent. Nor is such a latitude of expression unexampled in other cases. *Philo*, (in his treatise "*de Allegoriis*") says of Sarah the wife of Abraham that she was *without mother*, for no other imaginable reason than that her mother is not mentioned in the sacred writings ;—and *Livy*, the Roman historian, (IV. 3) represents a person of ignoble descent as "*nullo patre natus*."

With a similar view to the nature of his priesthood, and consequently in a figurative sense, Melchisedek is represented as "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," but as one "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."—The Jewish or Levitical priests were limited in respect of the age, or the period of life, at which their priestly service should both commence and terminate. As a *contrast*, therefore, to their case, the Apostle reminds the Hebrews that the Scriptures do not even make known to us when Melchisedek was born, or when he died,—that no age is specified, at which his functions as a priest had commenced, nor any age at which they had terminated,—that the duration of his *official life* had been unrestricted, without any appointed beginning or end,—and that the Scriptures bear witness to him only as *living*, or as a person in the real and *vital* exercise of his priestly functions, in order to our contemplating him as a more perfect type of Christ, who truly and literally liveth for

Melchisedek is accordingly said, in the passage have been "*made like unto the Son of God*," priestly office, a figure of what the Son of God wa



book of Genesis, he is represented as both a priest and a king—"King of Salem and the Priest of the most High God."—*Salem* appears to have been an ancient name for the city or place afterwards denominated *Jerusalem*. But the place in which Melchisedek reigned can be of no importance, otherwise than as the specification of it is calculated to preclude any supposition that his kingly office and dominion were of an illusory kind. At the period in question, the territory under the government of any particular potentate or king does not appear to have been extensive; there were, in consequence, a greater number of individuals invested with regal power within those districts to which the Scripture-history refers; and there cannot be a doubt that Melchisedek, as one of them, was in the exercise of all the functions of a king,

to become;—and, in order to our connecting the following words—"abideth a priest continually"—with the words—"Son of God," as their nearest antecedent,—it has been well observed that we have only to supply or fill up a very common *ellipsis*, so as to read the whole—"made like unto the Son of God, *who* abideth a priest continually."

Considered in these views, the Apostle's language respecting Melchisedek is perfectly consistent with the historical record of the Old Testament, in which he is obviously represented as differing from other men in nothing else than that of his being invested with the character of both a priest and a king.

over a people who constituted a part of the Church of God upon earth.

In what way, then, are we to derive an argument in support of ecclesiastical establishments from what we know of Melchisedek?

There are important conclusions to be drawn from his functions, both in the department of a king and in that of a priest; these will strictly harmonize with the conclusions to be derived from corresponding circumstances under the Mosaic dispensation; and, by considering the two cases in their natural connection, I shall be enabled to condense and abbreviate some part of the argument as applicable to both.

Let us, with this view, enquire, in the first place, what account can be given of the two offices of priest and king having been *united* in the person of Melchisedek.

Shall it be supposed that, under Divine Providence, the union of the two was not permitted, without a view to his religiously abstaining from all acts and functions as a king that could be aiding, as outward means, to the accomplishment of the ends and purposes of his priesthood? It is not the way of God to place his servants in any situation so unnatural and inconsistent. That Melchisedek was either required to abstain, or actually did abstain, from all exercise of his regal

power that could tend to strengthen his own hands as a priest, for the good of those to whom he ministered—is a proposition that few men will venture to maintain. Yet, in what other way shall the opponents of an ecclesiastical establishment account for what God was in this case pleased both to permit and to sanction? Do that protection and that aid of the civil magistrate, which are essential to a church establishment, include more than we may fairly presume to have been realized, by one who was priest as well as king of the people over whom he reigned? We might rather suppose that, in the case of Melchisedek, the functions of a priest and of a king were, in their exercise, more strictly combined than they now are for the support of any establishment which it is the object of these pages to defend.

But the notices we have of what concerns Melchisedek as a priest appear to sanction, more particularly, that element of an ecclesiastical establishment which is, in our day, more particularly reprobated;—for we learn that, as a priest, Melchisedek received *tithes*. When Abram was returning from the slaughter of the kings who had robbed his kinsman and made him a prisoner, Melchisedek “blessed him,” and Abram gave Melchisedek “tithes of all—the tenth part of the spoils “which he had taken in war.”

It may perhaps be argued that, in some cases, tithes have been paid to kings. But there is clear evidence that, in the case to which we now refer, Abram gave tithes to Melchisedek, not as a king, but as a priest. The very circumstances of the narrative, as contained in the book of Genesis, lead to this conclusion. For the payment of tithes by Abram is evidently stated in connection with what Melchisedek had done as a priest—with the blessing which, in that capacity, he had pronounced upon Abram. But the point in question, if it could be otherwise doubtful, is incontrovertibly established by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. For, in representing Christ as a priest *after the order of Melchisedek*, the Apostle illustrates the dignity of our Lord's priestly office, by referring to the fact that Melchisedek had received tithes of Abraham; he distinctly compares Melchisedek to the sons of Levi in their office of the priesthood, and illustrates the superiority of Melchisedek's office as a priest by adding that "he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises." \*

Now, *tithe*, as afterwards explained, denoted, more particularly, a tenth of the produce of the

\* Hebrews, chap. vii. verse 6.

soil,—a tenth, it is said, “of the increase of thy seed that the field bringeth forth year by year ;” but, in a more comprehensive sense, it seems to have included a tenth of all “increase” or acquisition. We find that, in Jacob’s vow to the Lord at Bethel (and it must not be forgotten that this also was under the patriarchal dispensation) his words were “of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee ;” and, accordingly, the tenth of the spoils, as paid by Abram to Melchisedek, was a tenth of his “increase” or acquisition at the time to which the historical record refers.

In these circumstances, it cannot well be denied that, under the patriarchal dispensation, the ministers of the visible church were more or less maintained, in a way similar to that by which ecclesiastical establishments are now supported. In reference to one individual, who appears to have been the head of the patriarchal priesthood, the tithes paid by Abram are decisive proof ; and, in connection with a fact so indisputable, it is surely natural to enquire—in what outward and visible way we can suppose Jacob to have disposed of that tenth of his “increase,” which he vowed to give unto the Lord. It will puzzle any man to say—how Jacob’s vow can have been performed, otherwise than by his applying the specified portion of his goods towards the outward expense of

maintaining in some way the honour of God, as connected with his church upon earth.

I do not say that these cases afford decisive evidence that it was by means of tithes that any of the priests under the patriarchal dispensation were maintained, *exclusively, and from year to year*. The facts with which we are made acquainted do not enable us either to affirm or deny this position. But it will not be found of small importance in our argument that a revenue, in some respects corresponding to what are now denominated *tithes*, was, under Divine authority, applied to the sustenance of the priesthood under the earliest dispensation of Divine grace, of which any account has been transmitted to us.

Is there nothing of a corresponding kind to be traced even in the heathen world, which may throw farther light on this point? Is there nothing to be there traced, for which it is not easy to account upon any other supposition than that of its having originated in an understanding and imitation of what had been the early custom and practice of the servants and worshippers of the true God? It will scarcely be denied that a tradition, however miserably corrupted, of many things which had been communicated to the servants of God or required of them, in the earliest ages, con-

tinued to have an influence on the popular faith and practice of the heathen, long after the wisest and most learned among themselves were ignorant of the circumstances in which it had originated. It is not therefore unimportant to remember, in connection with this part of our argument, that something very similar to what we have partly succeeded in tracing under the patriarchal dispensation, did actually prevail, at a subsequent period, in those communities of the heathen world with whose customs we are best acquainted.—The Athenians, saith Herodotus, consecrated a tenth part of their prize to the Gods.\* Laertius says that, when Pisistratus wrote to Solon, persuading him to return to Athens, he told him that every one there paid the tithe of his goods for the offering of sacrifices to the Gods.† Pausanias states that the Siphnians constantly presented a tenth part of the produce of their gold mines to Apollo.‡ And Xenophon refers to the tenth part of the produce of a field as consecrated to Diana.§

No heathen writer, it is believed, has accounted for a practice so peculiar. But, proceeding on a supposition—which does not seem unnatural—that

\* Antiq. I. c. 11, p. 18.

† Laert. lib. 1.

‡ Phocis, p. 628.

§ De Expedit. Cyri, lib. v.

the payment of tithes, as we have traced it both in the case of *Abram*, and by implication in that of his grandson *Jacob*, was not peculiar to these individuals, but customary in their day among the servants and worshippers of the true God, we cannot be at a loss respecting the origin of the practice in the heathen world ; and we accordingly find that *Potter*, in his *Archæologia Græca*, after referring to some of the authorities which have now been quoted, says that the practice in question “ was derived from the most early times, as appears from the well-known example of Abraham, who gave tithes of all to Melchisedek, King of Salem and Priest of the most High God.” \*

How, then, does the Mosaic dispensation accord with the patriarchal system, so far as we have hitherto proceeded in our argument ?

I have adverted to the Mosaic institutions as peculiar and exclusive. They appear to have been intended for effectuating a separation of one of the families of the earth from all other people and nations. But, from this very circumstance, it became necessary that all which concerned these institutions should be proportionally precise and specific ; and we are consequently in possession of

\* Vol. i. p. 278.



such minute details, both of what was ordained by God, and of the corresponding history of the people in question, as are calculated to throw much light upon the subject before us.

It seems obviously to have been the purpose of God that his visible church under the Mosaic dispensation should be upheld, not merely by such anunciations of his counsel and will as he was pleased to confirm and sanction by miraculous interpositions, but also in the more ordinary course of events, by the outward protection and aid of those individuals, whom he was pleased to invest with temporal dominion over the family or nation which he had chosen for his peculiar people. It will not be denied that for this purpose he stirred up such men as Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah, not only to correct the abuses which at any time prevailed in his visible church, but also to make provision for maintaining it in all its purity ;—nor will it be denied that, during the captivity of the Israelites, God was pleased to put it into the hearts of the Persian monarchs to deal with them tenderly, and even to give them aid for rebuilding the Temple, and re-establishing the worship of God at Jerusalem. What was done by the Jewish potentates for these sacred purposes is recorded to their honour ; and, to say the least, no praise or commen-

dation appears to have been bestowed on those rulers, who were neglectful of a similar duty when circumstances called for its discharge.

I postpone the broad inference from this statement which may be naturally anticipated,—because objections have been urged against our regarding the conduct of the kings of Israel and Judah as, in this case, an example or rule of duty. The objections will be considered in their proper place; but the reader must first be in possession of the whole argument, and the full amount of the conclusion, to which these objections are opposed.

With this view, it is essential in the meanwhile to consider what pecuniary provision was made, under the Mosaic economy, for the support of the church of God in the person of its ministers.

We have already seen that, under the patriarchal dispensation, Melchisedek as a high priest received tithes from Abram, and that Jacob's vow to the Lord at Bethel seems to have referred to the payment of tithes as incumbent on the worshippers of the true God, or at the least as acceptable to God. But how effectually is this part of the evidence strengthened by considering it in connection with what we know to have been not only the practice, but the strict and literal appointment of God, respecting tithes, under the immediately succeeding dispensation? In this re-

spect, as in others, the two preparatory dispensations cast such light upon one another, as leaves the unprejudiced mind at no loss respecting the counsel and will of that great Being, all whose ways are consistent. The ordinances of Moses, for the payment of tithes to the Levites in general, and to the priests in particular, are so well known that any detailed statement of them would be preposterous. Nothing can be more comprehensive than the declaration on this subject in the Book of Leviticus. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees is the Lord's ; it is holy unto the Lord ;" - - - "And concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." \*

It may perhaps be said that even this case does not fully meet the question at issue. One objection urged against the support of an established church is founded upon alleged injustice, and an alleged infringement of the rights of conscience, in making provision for it more or less at the expense of men who, as dissenters from the church, derive no immediate benefit from its ministrations ; and it may be said that the ordinances of Moses respecting tithes were not liable to this objection.

\* Lev. chap. xxvii. ver. 30, 32.

Now, I admit that, under the Mosaic dispensation, there neither was, nor could be, any such dissent from the established church as prevails in the present times. Any man who had publicly and openly disavowed the Levitical priesthood in the exercise of its functions must have been cut off from among the people of God ; and I readily concede that, for this reason, there is nothing in the ordinances of Moses, or rather in the procedure and practice under these ordinances, that can be regarded as a positive and direct example of an ecclesiastical establishment maintained at the expense of a community, *inclusive of dissenters*. But to what are we to ascribe all that is thus conceded, but to a moral impossibility arising from the nature of the case ? No individual of the Jewish commonwealth was *exempted* from the payment of tithes ; it was therefore impossible that any stronger or more comprehensive ordinance on the subject could have been either framed or desired ; and there is certainly nothing in the institutions of Moses that would lead us to give a different account of the matter. It is therefore both natural and fair to inquire—whether the account, which has been thus given, be not justified and strengthened by what we know of the *patriarchal* dispensation ;—and the light which we have hitherto derived from a compari-

son of the two preparatory dispensations, as proceeding from one unchangeable God, will not even in this case fail us.

With this view, let me ask—In what relation did Abram stand to that priest of the most High God to whom “he gave tithes of all?”—The very designation of *patriarchal*, as given to the dispensation under which Abram lived, will aid us toward the proper answer. He was himself a *patriarch*,—a term which literally signified nothing more than the head of a family. But, under the dispensation in question, the patriarchs were also priests, and must be understood as having statedly ministered,—each to his immediate household, if not also to its collateral branches. Noah and Abram, Eliphaz and Job, Isaac and Jacob, offered their own sacrifices. It is plain, therefore, that Abram did not depend on Melchisedek for the stated and ordinary ministrations of the priesthood; yet it is not less certain that he contributed to the maintenance of Melchisedek as a priest; and it would be most unnatural to suppose that either the relation in which he stood to Melchisedek, or the duties which he owed to him, were peculiar to himself individually, or not realised in the case of any other. It is more reasonable to suppose that, in this respect, the condition of Abram was the same with that of other patriarchs—the heads of fami-

lies or tribes—who were devoted to the service and worship of the true God. Absolute certainty is not, in this case, to be attained ; but even strong probability, in reference to the point in question, cannot be regarded as an unimportant element in our present argument. For if Melchisedek, as the head of the priesthood under the patriarchal dispensation, derived tithes from every household among the worshippers of the true God,—and consequently from many to whom it cannot be supposed that his immediate ministrations extended,—it seems strongly to forbid any rash conclusion that dissenters from an established church must be exempted from all contributions to its support as a national institution,—merely upon the ground that they decline to be of the number, who immediately and directly profit by the labour of its ministers.

It has been said, indeed, that we have no evidence of the payment of tithes having been *compulsory*, even under the Mosaic dispensation. But this remark wears the aspect of a *dernier* resort in the argument. What sort of evidence do our opponents suppose that we ought to produce? Was it really to be supposed that the brief history which has been transmitted to us of the Jewish commonwealth, should contain a statement of what we should now call *actions at law*, which had

taken place, for enabling individuals to recover their rights, or a compensation for the loss of them? Are not all laws enacted with a distinct understanding that they are to be enforced? Is there any thing in the case of the Mosaic institutions that should lead to an imagination of their having been, in this respect, an exception from the general rule? Were not the sanctions of the Mosaic law temporal and worldly? And can it, in this case, be supposed that such a law as that in question was not enforced by temporal and worldly means?

Let it not however be supposed that any imperfection in our argument upon this point, as derived from scriptural example, will affect our ultimate conclusion; for there is nothing in the charge of injustice to which it refers, even when accompanied with an alleged infringement on the rights of conscience, of which our own minds will not be found competent to form a *decisive* judgment, when the intrinsic merits of these objections shall, in the proper place, come under review.

In the meanwhile, it is necessary that we attend to some objections which demand immediate consideration, because peculiarly applicable to that part of the scriptural argument which we have now closed, and consequently standing in the way of the conclusions to be derived from it.

In the first place, it has been argued that, under the Mosaic dispensation, the government exercised over the peculiar people of God was a *Theocracy*, and that the procedure under it cannot, for that reason, be regarded as an example.

I admit that the kings of Israel and Judah were not only, as other potentates, vicegerents of God upon earth, but were under such a Divine control and direction as justifies the application which is made of the term *Theocracy*. In some instances, their government was even so controlled and directed by God, as to become subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes, by means which it would have been otherwise unwarrantable for them to employ. The extirpation of the Canaanites is a striking example of what I now state. No man under the direction of a good conscience could have been accessory to that measure—far less the immediate agent for its accomplishment—without a warrant or commission for the purpose from that Being who is Lord of the conscience,—who alone hath implanted it in man,—and who may see it wise, in a particular case, so far to supersede its functions, as to employ his servants in a work which is to be ultimately productive of good, though a work which their own consciences would otherwise have strictly forbidden.

So far as I understand the adversaries of eccle-



siastical establishments, this is the amount of their objection to our argument, founded on what is called a *Theocracy*. Yet, if this be really the ground of objection, I rather marvel at the confidence with which it is urged. It will not be pretended that such measures as I have now referred to constituted the *ordinary tenor* of the government exercised by the kings of Israel and Judah. Nor can the measures in question forbid us to regard their administration in other respects as an example, if we only find it in our power to make the requisite distinction. Were the means and the rule of distinction in any measure dubious, there might be cause for hesitation. But the principle which is to guide us, in distinguishing those acts of administration, which may be fairly regarded as an example, from others to which the objection in question applies, is so precise and unequivocal that "he who runs may read." Whatever we find inconsistent with that moral law, which God hath prescribed for the regulation of human conduct, is clearly an exception from what we either may or ought to imitate. But on the other hand, and so far as concerns the present objection, whatever appears to be consistent with the great law of moral obligation, and is at the same time exemplified by the kings of Israel and Judah, we may certainly regard as an object of imitation, just in proportion

to the evidence which we have that their government was either approved by God, or was under his immediate control and direction.—It cannot be necessary to specify cases in which they exercised their dominion for upholding the worship of God, by means not only consistent with the moral law, but in their essential nature praiseworthy, and unquestionably approved by him ; nor can I be wrong if, in these circumstances, I maintain that the more their government is regarded as virtually a *Theocracy*, the stronger evidence have we that the example which it affords is truly and strictly Divine.

In the second place, it has been argued that the Mosaic institutions were *typical* of things to come,—that the kings, more particularly, of Israel and Judah were types of Christ,—that their actions were typical of his work as a Saviour,—and that whatever was typical has been so done away in Christ himself, as to be in no respect an example.

Perhaps this objection must be understood as applying, also, to our argument from the patriarchal dispensation ; for, both as a priest and as a king, Melchisedek was certainly a type of Christ.

My own impression, indeed, is that I ought not to anticipate any attempt to urge the objection against the argument from what concerned Mel-

chisedek as a *priest*. For if, in receiving tithes, Melchisedek was a type of Christ, to what does this amount, but that his privilege of receiving tithes was a type and emblem of a privilege that should be ultimately realized in Christ himself or his church upon earth?

To the argument from Melchisedek's functions as a king, the objection may seem more applicable; for I have maintained that, as a king, he could not be indifferent to the success of his functions and labour as priest, but may be fairly supposed to have exercised his regal power for strengthening his own hands in the accomplishment of the ends and purposes of his priesthood. It is therefore fair that *his* case be comprehended under our decision (whatever it shall be) respecting the kings of Israel and Judah, who in their regal office are to be regarded as types of the promised Messiah.

Now, the objection is that, because they were types, their conduct as kings is not to be regarded as an example,—an argument very nearly allied to that which we have considered as resulting from their government being virtually a *Theocracy*;—yet there is a distinction between the two cases, which has called for their being separately considered.

I admit that those kings, who were types of the Messiah, may, in some instances, and in their

regal capacity as types, have exercised their dominion in a way so peculiar, that, while it serves to prefigure Christ's spiritual dominion, it may be inapplicable to any other case. But are we, for this reason, to conclude that the more ordinary measures of their government may not have been directed by a view to the interest and well-being of those over whom they reigned, or that their conduct in this respect may not be regarded as an example? In rejecting such a conclusion, we shall not place ourselves in any dilemma, respecting what we may, or may not, imitate. For, if we be, in the first place, satisfied that the conduct in question is not incompatible with the laws of eternal and immutable obligation, it is not to be supposed that, under the guidance of an honest heart, we can be at a loss to judge whether, as an example, it be or be not applicable to our own case ; nor is it easy to perceive how, in such circumstances, we can escape from a moral obligation to imitate.

“ The circumstance of actions being in one view  
“ typical,” (says Dr M'Crie) “ is not inconsistent  
“ with their being in another view moral and ex-  
“ emplary. *Joseph* may be viewed as a type of  
“ Christ in feeding his father and brethren ; but  
“ did he not, by the same act, give an eminent ex-  
“ ample of filial and fraternal affection and duty ?  
“ While *David* is viewed as a type of Christ in

“subduing the enemies of Israel, did he not also discharge a moral duty in defending his subjects? And may not his example be used to prove that all wars are not unlawful?”\*—In reference to such cases, we are certainly entitled to ask what there is in the typical purpose or design that should preclude our acknowledging, and profiting by, the moral lesson. The latter is, to say the least, as obvious as the former. It is not possible that, in such cases, what is typical should prevent our distinguishing the precise amount of what is moral. It is not possible, therefore, that we can err by endeavouring to imitate. Nor is it possible that we can derive from the scriptures of truth that practical instruction in all righteousness which they are intended to afford, if we allow ourselves to be influenced by such arguments as are employed for deterring us from an attempt to imitate.

I have no wish to forget that—not merely a certain number of individuals in their regal capacity, but the kingly office itself, and all the individuals who were invested with it, under the Mosaic dispensation, are *said* to have been types of Christ, and that much importance has been attached to this view of the argument.

If the conclusion at which we ought to arrive

\* “Statement of the difference,” &c. p. 128.

depended on the truth of what is thus asserted, I should certainly hesitate about admitting its truth. To make an assertion, and to prove what is asserted, are different things ; and, in reference to the assertion in question, the proof seems to be altogether wanting.

But I confess myself utterly at a loss to find out what the adversaries of ecclesiastical establishments could gain by an admission of what is in this case asserted. Supposing the regal office in the person of the kings of Israel and Judah to have been itself typical of the kingly office of Christ, what new bearing can it have on the argument ? It is fully admitted that the exercise of the office in question, or the actions performed by individuals invested with it, did, in many cases, prefigure what was to be done by Christ in the exercise of his office as a king. What, then, would follow from our admitting, farther, that the regal office itself, abstractedly considered, was to be regarded as a type or a figure ? What additional ground of argument could it in any way supply ? One author, in adverting to our Lord's office as a king, says that, " of this Divine office, the glory " of which belongs to himself, and never was given " or can be given to another, he was pleased to institute a type, or symbolical representation, in " the kingly office under the Old Testament ;" and,

after some unexceptionable reference to the Jewish priesthood as having "passed away," he adds—"who, then, does not see that the office of the Jewish kings has transpired as truly as the office of the Jewish priests?"\* Most certainly, every thing connected with the Jewish kings, whether it shall be called office or administration of office, has "transpired" or passed away. But are we to be thereby prevented from looking back to the conduct of the Jewish kings at the time when they both exercised, and were warranted to exercise, the office in question? Or does the circumstance of their office having so "transpired" forbid us to distinguish, in the way previously stated, what was merely typical and figurative in their regal government from that which was also moral and exemplary, so as, on the one hand, to improve what was typical and figurative, only for the confirmation of our faith, and, on the other, to make what was moral and exemplary an object of our imitation?

We are told, indeed, by the same author to whom I have last referred, "that it is only one part of the conduct of the Jewish kings with which, in this controversy we have any concern; it is only the power they exercised in

\* "Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered,"—pp. 77, 78.

“ matters of religion, the compulsory power by  
“ which they interfered with the natural liberty  
“ of men, controlling their opinions, and subject-  
“ ing them to penal inflictions for neglecting or  
“ profaning the worship of God.”\* This seems  
to be an important explanation. But does it not  
amount to an abandonment of the author’s whole  
objection against the argument that is founded on  
the example of the kings of Israel and Judah? So  
far as I know, *it is not maintained* that any thing  
in the conduct of these rulers can be regarded as  
an example for the exercise of “ compulsory power  
“ in matters of religion,—either interfering with  
“ the natural liberty of men, or controlling their  
“ opinions;” an imitation of them in any such  
case would be an infringement of the moral law  
which God hath given us. But it will not be de-  
nied that they upheld the cause of religion by other  
and very different means; and, in respect of such  
means only is it proposed that their conduct should  
be sustained as an example.

If I could suppose myself doing injustice to the  
argument of any man, I should be truly sorry for  
it. But it seems to me that a very false import-  
ance has been attached to the objection that has  
now been examined.

\* “ Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered,” p. 79.



From the whole argument, then, of this section, I hold myself entitled to conclude—That we have, in the Old Testament, the authority of example under Divine guidance and direction, for what constitute the leading principles of an ecclesiastical establishment,—that the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations are in this respect, as in others, consistent,—that the same authority, with which Melchisedek was invested as a king, and by which it may be fairly presumed that he strengthened his own hands as a priest, was afterwards employed, under the sanction of Heaven, by kings and other potentates of Israel and Judah,—in a way which may be regarded as an example,—for the protection and aid of the visible church of God, or, in other words, for all that is truly necessary towards the maintenance of an ecclesiastical establishment.

Whether these conclusions be fairly applicable to the circumstances of the church under the Christian dispensation—will fully appear when the various objections to their application shall be brought under review. But, as the same objections may be urged against what is contained in the next section, the requisite answer will be given with more effect, when we shall have it in our power to consider them all in their bearing.

## SECTION II.

ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS, DERIVED FROM CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

I. IT will not be supposed that this part of the argument is to be presented and followed out in an isolated view, or in a way that shall admit of our forgetting what we have found sanctioned by Divine and scriptural example under two preceding dispensations. As certainly as the Divine Being is, in His nature, unchangeable, all his ways are consistent ; and his condescension is so great that, so far as concerns his dealings with men, we are enabled to account for every change in his moral government, by a corresponding change in the circumstances with which it is connected. Great changes have been, at two periods, permitted and sanctioned in the condition of his visible church upon earth ; but, in both cases, the reasons of the change have been manifest. When the patriarchal gave way to the Mosaic dispensation, there was virtually nothing abolished ; the change consisted, chiefly if not entirely, in the en-

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actment of a ritual and ceremonial law, for purposes which are well understood,—while the law which had been written on the hearts of men, was reduced into the form of express commandments. When, again, the Mosaic gave way to the Christian dispensation, the ritual and ceremonial law was abolished, for the obvious reason that it had served the purpose for which it was designed. But men were not left to regard it as abolished, merely because, in their fallible judgment, it had become unnecessary; we have in the New Testament the most direct and pointed declarations of what was, in this respect, the counsel and will of God, and the most convincing arguments in vindication of the change.

It is therefore natural to inquire whether we have any corresponding intimation of its being the will of God that, under the new dispensation, His visible church should *not* enjoy the outward protection and aid of kings and other civil magistrates.—We have seen that, under the Old Testament, the church did enjoy this advantage; we have seen that the advantage was imparted to it by God himself, in a way which gave no ground for apprehending that it was to be thereafter withheld or withdrawn;—and, until we have some opposite and unequivocal intimation of the Divine counsel, we are bound to conclude that no change has been in this respect intended.

I therefore repeat the question—have we, in the New Testament, any intimation of such a change? The burden of proof in this case lies upon our opponents in the argument. What evidence, then, do they produce? They tell us that Christ himself intimated that his kingdom was not to be of this world,—a declaration which, in the proper place, we shall find totally inapplicable to the point in question. But may we not ask, in the meanwhile, whether, upon the supposition that Christ intended to forbid the interposition of all civil authority in the outward concerns of his church, it is possible to account for his not having made his design in this respect more manifest. Were there no natural opportunities for his doing so? He reproached the Pharisees for placing an unjust reliance on that ceremonial law which was to be abolished; he found and embraced opportunities for correcting much that was wrong in their understanding of the counsel of Heaven. What it was improper for himself to explain, on account of the hardness of their hearts, he left in charge to his Apostles who were afterwards to speak in his name. But, neither from his own mouth, nor from that of his Apostles, did there ever proceed any condemnation of a friendly interposition of civil power in behalf of the visible church.

One author indeed has represented Christ as

doing much, from time to time, for the purpose of weaning the hearts of the Jews from their predilection for "a National Religion."\*—But all that Christ in this respect did was obviously for no other purpose than that of weaning them from their attachment to those institutions of Moses which were to be distinctly and unequivocally abolished, and from their vain hope of a temporal kingdom to be established and maintained under the Messiah as its temporal head.

That ritual and ceremonial law, which Christ abolished, was referred to, even under the Mosaic dispensation, in terms calculated to *prepare* the minds of men for its abolition. "To what purpose (said the Lord by the prophet Isaiah) is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? - - "I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats:" - - "Bring me no more vain oblations," - - "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."†—It is obvious that such language was calculated to remind men that the ceremonial law had no foundation in the principles of essential and unchangeable rectitude,

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, p. 104.

† Isaiah, chap. i. ver. 11—16.

and, consequently, to instruct them that its abolition was not only a possible thing, but an event which might be naturally expected, as soon as that law should have served its peculiar and figurative purpose. But, neither in the Old Testament, nor in the New, do we find any corresponding language which could induce men to think lightly of the advantage which the Church of God had derived, or might continue to derive, from a friendly interposition of civil power,—or any language which could incline them to suppose that a change of circumstances ever would or could supersede the propriety and importance of such a friendly interposition, on the part of those kings and others in authority, who should, in their hearts, and by their profession, be duly and suitably disposed to it.

Is there any other case, then, in which God has been pleased to abolish what he once authorized and sanctioned, without such an intimation of his purpose as we have looked for in vain in the case of ecclesiastical establishments? If there be, it has not been referred to, so far as I know, by our opponents in the argument; and if there be not, what are we to conclude? Considering the ceremonial law as the only case of an ordinance of Heaven having been confessedly abolished by the same power which had established it, and con-



From the whole argument, then, of this section, I hold myself entitled to conclude—That we have, in the Old Testament, the authority of example under Divine guidance and direction, for what constitute the leading principles of an ecclesiastical establishment,—that the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations are in this respect, as in others, consistent,—that the same authority, with which Melchisedek was invested as a king, and by which it may be fairly presumed that he strengthened his own hands as a priest, was afterwards employed, under the sanction of Heaven, by kings and other potentates of Israel and Judah,—in a way which may be regarded as an example,—for the protection and aid of the visible church of God, or, in other words, for all that is truly necessary towards the maintenance of an ecclesiastical establishment.

Whether these conclusions be fairly applicable to the circumstances of the church under the Christian dispensation—will fully appear when the various objections to their application shall be brought under review. But, as the same objections may be urged against what is contained in the next section, the requisite answer will be given with more effect, when we shall have it in our power to consider them all in their bearing.

similar view ; but they must not cease to be quoted for the same purpose, so long as the controversy about ecclesiastical establishments shall be continued. Evidence, which is in its nature decisive, must not be left out of view because some have chosen to reject it.

That the language of the second psalm is applicable to Christ, and the circumstances of the Gospel dispensation, cannot be denied by any man who makes the New Testament his rule of faith ; for a very considerable portion of it is quoted, and so applied, in the book of *The Acts of the Apostles*. \*—At the commencement of the psalm the kings of the earth and its rulers are represented as taking counsel against the Lord and his Anointed. Their utter discomfiture is next referred to, and partly in words which the Apostle Paul represents as having been figurative of Christ's resurrection from the state of the dead. † Then follows an admonition equally authoritative and affectionate. “ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ;  
 “ be instructed, ye judges of the earth ; serve the  
 “ Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling ; kiss  
 “ ye the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish  
 “ from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a

\* Chap. iv. verses 25, 26.

† Acts, chap. xiii. ver. 33.

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It is therefore natural to inquire whether we have any corresponding intimation of its being the will of God that, under the new dispensation, His visible church should *not* enjoy the outward protection and aid of kings and other civil magistrates.—We have seen that, under the Old Testament, the church did enjoy this advantage; we have seen that the advantage was imparted to it by God himself, in a way which gave no ground for apprehending that it was to be thereafter withheld or withdrawn;—and, until we have some opposite and unequivocal intimation of the Divine counsel, we are bound to conclude that no change has been in this respect intended.

I therefore repeat the question—have we, in the New Testament, any intimation of such a change? The burden of proof in this case lies upon our opponents in the argument. What evidence, then, do they produce? They tell us that Christ himself intimated that his kingdom was not to be of this world,—a declaration which, in the proper place, we shall find totally inapplicable to the point in question. But may we not ask, in the meanwhile, whether, upon the supposition that Christ intended to forbid the interposition of all civil authority in the outward concerns of his church, it is possible to account for his not having made his design in this respect more manifest. Were there no natural opportunities for his doing so? He reproached the Pharisees for placing an unjust reliance on that ceremonial law which was to be abolished; he found and embraced opportunities for correcting much that was wrong in their understanding of the counsel of Heaven. What it was improper for himself to explain, on account of the hardness of their hearts, he left in charge to his Apostles who were afterwards to speak in his name. But, neither from his own mouth, nor from that of his Apostles, did there ever proceed any condemnation of a friendly interposition of civil power in behalf of the visible church.

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tried according to its own circumstances. If prophetic language were, in all cases, to be subjected to an interpretation that would accommodate its meaning to every particular circumstance that is found ultimately *connected* with that event to which it generally refers, the language of prophecy would be so wrested, as to deprive, it in many instances, of all credit and all consistency.

How stands the question, then, in reference to the present case?—When it is said that “the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together” against Christ, the fact stated is of a nature obviously and strictly *connected* with that which had been foretold; and the statement of it, therefore, was not unnatural. But, most certainly, it does not appear to be the very fact itself which was predicted; nor are there any circumstances which should induce us to regard it as the fulfilment of the prediction; for the exact fulfilment is to be found in the immediately preceding words, which represent Herod and Pontius Pilate as having conspired against the Saviour. It is in proportion as there is ambiguity in the words of any particular prophecy that we need to borrow light respecting its import, either from the particular event in which it is fulfilled, or from the circumstances immediately connected with that event. But there is not, perhaps, within the compass of the Sacred Vo-

lume, any prophecy of a very distant event, which, to a mind enlightened by what actually befel the promised Messiah, can appear less ambiguous, in respect of its import, than that which is contained in the second psalm, respecting the hostility to him and his cause which was to be manifested by kings or others invested with temporal dominion. We are not therefore in want of collateral aid for understanding the precise import of this prophecy. It is quite enough to know that it was strictly fulfilled, when Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired against Christ. The additional fact stated in the New Testament—that “the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together,” for the same nefarious purpose, cannot, in one way or other, affect the sense and meaning of the original prediction, in the view of any discriminating mind.

But, perhaps, I may be blameable for having reasoned laboriously upon this point, without a cause; for, though I have no disposition to blot out what I have written, the objection, to which I have replied, may be regarded as in its very nature untenable. Supposing, if we could, that the circumstance of “the Gentiles and the people of Israel being gathered together” against the Saviour, were to be regarded as an essential part of the fulfilment of the prophecy,—does it follow,



from *their* having manifested hostility against him, *as individuals, or in their private capacity*, that we are not to understand the Psalmist as foretelling that Herod and Pontius Pilate were to manifest a corresponding hostility, in their public capacity as rulers? We know that they actually did so in their public capacity;—and this circumstance, in addition to every other argument, tends to establish undeniably the point in question, the important fact—that, in the 2d Psalm, kings and rulers are, in the first place, reprov'd for having exercised their authority, as rulers, against the Lord and his anointed, and are, in the next place, exhorted to a very opposite exercise of the same authority,—to “serve the Lord with fear, and to “kiss the Son lest he be angry.

This unavoidable conclusion seems to me to possess all the importance, which can be supposed attachable to a single case, in support of our argument from Divine authority. Indeed I am not willing to conceal the fact, that the degree of attention, which I have bestowed on the objections now disposed of, is not to be imputed—so much to any apprehension I had of their importance, as to an impression of the high importance of the *conclusion* to which they were opposed, and an earnest desire that there should not be left even the shadow of an objection to it. No man, who

calls himself a Christian, can deny that the language of the 2d Psalm refers to what was to be the condition of the visible church after the advent of the promised Messiah, and contains, at the same time, a declaration of the Divine counsel and will respecting it, during the progress of the new or the Christian dispensation. Nor does there seem to be more room left for denying it to be the will of God, as there expressed, that kings and other rulers should exercise their authority—not in opposition to the church, as at the beginning, but in its behalf, and for its outward support in the world.

But after having seen that the kings of the earth are thus admonished to serve the Lord, by employing the outward means in their power for the advancement of his spiritual kingdom,—it must be satisfactory to find that they are also represented, in the language of prophecy, as ultimately giving obedience to this admonition. With this view, therefore, let us attend to the language of the 72d Psalm.

It is there said, with reference to the promised Messiah, “The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles  
“shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and  
“Seba shall offer gifts; yea all kings shall fall  
“down before him.”\*

This psalm is not, like that to which I former-

\* Psalm lxxii. verses 10, 11.

ly referred, quoted and applied to Christ in the New Testament. But, that it is truly applicable to him and his spiritual kingdom on earth, will not, it is hoped, be denied by Christians of any denomination. It is well known that the language of prophecy has, in some instances, a double import and application, and has, in consequence, been fulfilled in two different events,—in some respects similar, though distant from one another in point of time. Of this the psalm now in question may be regarded as a specimen. The inspired author seems to refer, in the first instance, to his son Solomon, and the glory of his reign. But Solomon was a type of Christ; the whole tenor of the psalm, so far as applicable to Solomon, marks him out in his typical capacity; and we find that, in some passages, the Psalmist employs language which directs us to look, beyond any type or figure whatever, to the more exalted person and the more glorious event prefigured. The language is, in some passages, incapable of being otherwise explained or accounted for. “His name” (it is said) “shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.”—We are therefore unequivocally authorized to interpret the interesting prophecy which the psalm contains,—in the only way in

which it will admit of a consistent interpretation, —as ultimately fulfilled, or to be fulfilled, in Christ and his Church upon earth.

It has been thought, indeed, by some men, that the language of the inspired author, throughout the psalm, ought to be understood as applicable to Christ alone and exclusively. But the words which I have quoted seem at least to have an *allusion* to the case of Solomon ; there can be no doubt that the prophecy respecting gifts and presents from “the kings of Tarshish and of the “Isles” - - “of Sheba and of Seba” is calculated to remind us of what Solomon received, as either tribute or voluntary gifts, from the kings of many surrounding nations. Nor can I have any interest in overlooking this circumstance ;—For, whether the prophetic language be, for this reason, understood as applicable, in the first instance, to Solomon as a type, or only as making an indirect allusion to his case, the basis of our argument is not affected ; the words in question must still be understood as either exclusively or ultimately descriptive of that tribute of homage, which the kings of the earth were to pay,—and were encouraged to pay—to Christ as a Saviour, by an exercise of their authority calculated to protect and uphold his Church, in respect of its outward condition in the world.

Let me only subjoin one additional and very short quotation to the same purpose, from the language of the evangelical prophet Isaiah. "Kings" (saith the prophet) "shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers."

After the reasoning, which I have employed, for making it obvious that the prophecy, to which I last referred, is applicable to Christ and his visible Church, I am very unwilling to enter upon any discussion respecting the application of this prophecy to the same case. For, admitting it to be the opinion of some men that the prophecy now in question, may be understood as having received its fulfilment in circumstances connected with the return of the Israelites from their Babylonish captivity,—I do not, by this admission, forfeit my right to urge the argument, which I have in view, upon many more—the great majority, it is believed, of the Christian world,—who regard the prophecy as fulfilled, and to be farther fulfilled, in the outward fortunes of the Christian Church.

I shall not even be enticed into any *critical* discussion of an objection which has been urged against what I conceive to be the import of this prophecy.—It has been said that the term—"their queens"—represents the persons in question as only the wives or consorts of kings, not as them-

selves queens regnant, and that, if such queens are notwithstanding represented as nursing mothers, the corresponding denomination of nursing fathers, as applied to their husbands, can be descriptive of nothing more than what they do in their private capacity. But, supposing it proved that, according to the just connection of the passage, the queens in question are to be understood as only the wives or consorts of kings,—How does it follow that kings, as nursing fathers, are not to employ, in behalf of the Church of Christ, that authority which *they at least*—whatever be the condition of others—certainly do possess? The objection, when so considered, falls directly under the argument by which it was shewn in a preceding case, that the mention of “the Gentiles” and “the people of Israel” along with “Herod” and “Pontius Pilate” cannot prevent our understanding that Herod and Pontius Pilate are referred to in their capacity as rulers.

In the view, therefore, of all who do not deny that this prophecy is applicable to the Church of Christ, I hold it as affording evidence of the counsel and will of God, that kings should extend to the church such protection and support as are denoted by the term of *nursing* fathers; and I desire to ask what language could have been employed for conveying a more perfect idea of all the

affection and zeal and determination of mind, with which it is possible for them to employ their power for a purpose so sacred.

I am not much disposed to rest upon what is understood to be farther predicted in the Old Testament, about the service which *nations and kingdoms* should either render to Christ or withhold from him,—not even upon the language of the New Testament in which it is declared that “the kingdoms of this world were to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,”—because I have some impression that *nations and kingdoms* may be understood as denoting nothing more than *multitudes* who should be converted to the faith of the Gospel.—So far, indeed, as the service of nations is, in scriptural language, connected with the service of kings as ruling in the nations, it may be fairly maintained that there is a distinct reference to men in their public and national capacity. But I am willing to forego even this advantage, rather than have the appearance of mingling what is at all ambiguous or doubtful with an argument which is otherwise incontrovertible and conclusive.—I conceive that the admonition to kings respecting Christ and his Church, contained in the 2d Psalm,—the corresponding prophecy, in the 72d, that kings should

offer gifts and fall down before him,—and the prediction of Isaiah respecting kings as “nursing fathers,” do of themselves amount to decisive evidence of the Divine purpose, respecting an interposition of civil government in what outwardly concerns the Church.

Though it be, hitherto, from the prophetic language of the Old Testament, that we have derived evidence of what immediately affects the New Testament church, no man who acknowledges the *inspiration* of the Old Testament, can upon this ground object to our argument as either unfair or inconclusive. But what says the New Testament itself? It is unnatural to suppose that it should be altogether silent in this case.

In the first place, the New Testament instructs us that kings and other rulers still derive their authority from God—from that great Being, for the advancement of whose cause in the world we contend that their authority ought to be exercised.—“Let every soul” (saith the Apostle Paul) “be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”\*

\* Rom. chap. xiii. v. 1, 2.



And, in conformity to what is so expressly declared, we are exhorted to present our prayers to God in behalf of kings and all in authority. \*

It has been remarked, indeed, that, in the language of another Apostle, civil government seems to be called an ordinance of man. But the very words, upon which this observation is founded, make it obvious that the Apostle intended to represent civil government as, at the same time, an ordinance of God. "Submit yourselves" (says Peter) "to every ordinance of man, *for the Lord's sake*; whether it be to the king as supreme, or "to governors as unto them that are sent by him;" - - - "*For so is the will of God.*" †

But how does it appear that, under the new dispensation, the magistrates whom God hath ordained, and so expressly requires us to obey, have authority to intermeddle in what outwardly concerns the interests of his church?

This question may be partly answered in a very obvious way. For, when the ordinance of God in behalf of kings and other rulers was so explicitly renewed under the Gospel dispensation,—if it had been intended to impose any new and peculiar restriction upon their authority, it is impossible to suppose that the inspired writers would have left

\* 1 Tim. ch. ii. v. 1, 2.

† 1 Peter, ch. ii. v. 13, 14, 15.

us ignorant of the restriction, or would not, in some way, have adverted to it.

But, in fact, that renewed charter from Heaven, under which civil magistrates now exercise their authority, is not only unrestricted, in respect of the words employed, but is expressed in such language as renders it peculiarly unnatural to attempt imposing upon it the particular restriction in question. When the Apostle Paul exhorts us, in the passage already quoted, to be subject to “the powers that be ordained of God,”—he adds, as a reason, that every such power is a “minister of God to us for good.”\*

It would not be easy to select any equal number of words, either more comprehensive than these in their import, or which could more naturally lead us to anticipate that function of the civil magistrate against which objection is taken.—Is it not “for good” to be helpful towards the maintenance of religious ordinances among men? Or is it natural to conclude, from the language employed,—either that the magistrate, in the exercise of his power, is precluded from employing it for such a purpose,—or that this purpose is not one of those, for which he is called to employ it? If he is to be guided by the comparative importance of different objects and purposes,—what may be sub-

\* Rom. ch. xiii. v. 4.

servient to the spiritual interests of men seems rather to call for a preference.

But, if it be really necessary to shew that the maintenance and advancement of religion ought not to be regarded as an exception from the "good" for which the civil magistrate is an appointed "minister of God," we cannot have far to look for evidence;—For it is well known to be the bounden duty of *every man, according to his circumstances*, to do what he can towards the advancement of religion, both for the honour of God and for the "good" of his brethren. This position is so undeniable that I should be ashamed to reason in support of it. The only question, therefore, is whether there be any thing in the circumstances or the office of the civil magistrate, that should lead us to regard him in his public capacity, as an exception from this rule, and exempted from this duty?

It will be replied that, in his public capacity, he exercises authority of *a temporal and worldly kind*; and that it is upon this ground his interposition is condemned. But is there nothing specially and undeniably required by God, which amounts to a similar exercise of authority, for a purpose strictly similar to that now in question? Is there nothing similar in the authority which masters are required to exercise over their ser-

vants—parents over their children—heads of families over their whole households. There is certainly much that bears upon this point, under both the patriarchal system, and the Mosaic economy; but we shall find all the evidence respecting it that can be desired in what is essential to the Christian dispensation.—It will not be denied that the ten commandments of the moral law are obligatory upon Christians. What, then, says the fourth commandment with reference to this matter? “In it (the Sabbath) thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.”

It is plain that, under this commandment, every head of a family is made answerable for the conduct of his whole household, in reference to the outward sanctification of the Sabbath; yet how is it possible that he should discharge the duty in this case required of him, without the exercise of authority? It cannot be denied that the tenor of the commandment implies both on his part a right to command, and on the part of his household an obligation to obey; nor can it be disguised that the case to which the whole refers is strictly and unequivocally religious.

In reference, then, to the exercise of such authority, how, or upon what ground, can we distinguish

the case of a magistrate from that of a master or a parent? Unless some very important and appropriate distinction can be pointed out, it will be no easy matter to avoid concluding—that what God requires of masters and parents,—and requires for a religious purpose—must also be the duty of magistrates, with the same view and for the same purpose, according to the circumstances in which they are placed.

For inducing us, however, to suppose that the outward support of religion and its ordinances is an exception from the rule under which the civil magistrate is declared to be a “minister of God to us for good,” it has been shewn—that there are many other good purposes for which it is impossible, in the nature of things, that his authority can be made effectual.—Regarded as an abstract statement, this position is undeniable; but how does it apply to the point in question? *Because* the civil magistrate cannot accomplish all that his heart would incline him to do, is he to make no endeavour after the good which it is in his power to do? His functions would, in this case, resolve themselves at once into a nullity. Were he to supersede all exercise of his authority for the maintenance of the church of God upon earth, merely because there are other good purposes which, from the nature of the case, outward authority cannot

accomplish,—would he not have exactly the same ground for declining all exercise of his authority towards the maintenance of peace and order in civil society? It cannot be pretended that the means of accomplishing the latter purpose are more in his power than the means which he is expected to employ in reference to the former. All that the civil magistrate either does, or is expected to do, for the outward maintenance of the church of God, involves in it nothing which he has not very natural and easy means of accomplishing;—and it will appear, I trust, in the proper place, that the means which he does employ are not without a most salutary effect.

But to return to the more direct scriptural argument,—when we are required to pray “for kings, and for all that are in authority,” there is a special reason assigned—a special purpose which we ought to have in view in praying for them; and the purpose is “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”—Now it has been well observed that “what Christians are here to pray for, magistrates must be bound to promote as their end; and this is not simply a quiet and peaceable life, but all godliness and honesty.”\*

It seems to me that what is implied, if not ex-

\* M'Crie's "Statement of the difference," &c. p. 139.

pressed, in this remark, amounts to an unanswerable argument. When we are required to pray for kings and others in authority, in order to our living in *all godliness* as well as honesty, is it not an unequivocal intimation of the purpose of God that our life and conversation in respect of godliness is to be somehow promoted by those for whom we pray. Our own progress or advancement in godliness being the ultimate end and purpose of our prayer,—what we pray for in behalf of the magistrate cannot be regarded in any other view than as a proximate and intermediate object, by means of which the accomplishment of our ultimate purpose is to be promoted;—nor is there any way in which a favourable answer to our prayer in behalf of the magistrate can tend to our advancement in godliness, unless he somehow exercise his authority for securing to us the advantage of the outward means of grace. It is therefore impossible to evade the conclusion—that, when the Divine Being directs us to pray for kings and other magistrates, in order to our living in all *godliness*, he gives clear and evident intimation of his counsel and will that magistrates shall exercise their authority in a way that may be somehow helpful towards a godly life.

Are there no particular instances or cases to

which we may refer, in illustration of this argument? Are there no cases in which kings and others in authority do actually exercise their power towards the advancement of religion, in a way which will be objected to by *few* men who have any sense of religion?—The national laws which prohibit blasphemy, polygamy, and arbitrary divorce, have, at least, a tendency to prevent what is opposed to, and inconsistent with, true religion and godliness;—but the laws which provide for the outward sanctification of the Sabbath constitute a case still more appropriate.

We have already seen that the authority, which every head of a family is, in this case, required to exercise, may be fairly regarded as evidence that the exercise of a similar authority is within the province of an earthly magistrate. But let me now ask—Whether national governments do not, in fact, exercise authority for the outward sanctification of the Sabbath, with the full approbation of the public mind?—In Scotland more particularly, we have a code of laws which admirably provide for that important purpose, and which have, more or less, the effect of restraining the irreligious from such violations of the Sabbatical rest as would otherwise disgrace our land. One of two things, therefore, is incumbent on our opponents in the argument;—they must either main-



tain that the human laws which provide against the profanation of the Sabbath ought to be repealed,—or they must show that these laws can be preserved and executed, consistently with the principle that civil governments have no right to exercise their authority for the outward support of religion and its ordinances.

The first of these positions has not, so far as I know, been maintained in its full extent. But the case seems to have been explained by one of our opponents, in a way which will be found to imply—in the first place, that it is in reference to secular matters only,—and, in the second place, that it is for the suspension of *labour or business* only—not of *amusements* on the Sabbath, that the interposition of human laws can be justified.

On account of the very delicate nature of what I now state, I have such an anxious desire to secure myself against a misrepresentation of the author's meaning as I trust will plead my apology for a more lengthened quotation of his words than would otherwise be reasonable.

After adverting to the fact that “Christians  
“ would suffer much inconvenience and pecuniary  
“ loss, if all the world were suffered to pursue  
“ their worldly business on that day which they”  
(sincere Christians) “devoted to retirement and  
“ religious worship,”—after admitting that “it

“ would subject Christians to many disadvantages  
“ in their worldly business, but not more than  
“ they would be able to bear under the influence  
“ of the truth,”—the author proceeds in these  
terms—“ We are thankful for the protection which  
“ the law of the land gives us in this respect ; and  
“ we can be so without conceding to the civil  
“ power the right of interference in matters of re-  
“ ligious. It is the duty of the civil magistrate to  
“ enforce obedience to the law of God, not in re-  
“ lation to religious worship, but in all matters  
“ which relate to right and property between man  
“ and man. Some define the magistrate’s power  
“ to relate to the second table of the law only ;  
“ but this is not quite correct. There is one com-  
“ mand of the second table, namely the tenth,  
“ which he cannot enforce, because it relates to  
“ the thoughts of the heart ; and there is a part  
“ of the first table which he can and ought to en-  
“ force, because it relates to a matter of property  
“ and right between man and man. The eighth  
“ commandment gives every man a right to his  
“ own property ; and the fourth commandment  
“ gives to every man, especially to servants, and  
“ even to labouring cattle, a right to one day in  
“ seven, to rest from the service of their masters ;  
“ and it is as much the duty of the civil power  
“ to protect them in this right, which can be done

“ only by an authoritative suspension of worldly  
“ business on that day, as to protect the property  
“ and the lives of the subjects generally. On this  
“ ground, and this only, I consider the rest of the  
“ Sabbath a proper subject of human legisla-  
“ tion.” \*

When these words are duly considered, in their connection with what I have referred to as preceding them, they must be understood as importing—that the magistrate has a right, for the sake of servants and cattle, to enforce a cessation from all worldly labour, on one day in seven—that, in consequence, sincere Christians, who devote the Sabbath to retirement and religious worship, will be secured against the pecuniary loss which they would suffer, from men who are regardless of religion being allowed to follow out their worldly business on the same day,—and that, for this purpose alone, and to this extent alone, are civil governments entitled to enforce the observance of the Sabbath. That the author does not acknowledge the right or duty of the magistrate to prohibit *amusements* on the Sabbath seems to be undeniable from his restricting that duty so expressly to “an authoritative suspension of worldly business on that day.” But I should hesitate in

\* M'Gavin's "Church Establishments considered," pp. 76, 77, 78.

ascribing such an opinion to him, if it were not equally obvious that the purport and tenor of his argument proceed upon it. He admits that religious men would suffer much inconvenience and pecuniary loss if the irreligious were allowed to pursue their ordinary business on the Sabbath, and therefore acknowledges the right of the magistrate to prohibit all worldly business on one day in seven ; but, though the irreligious were allowed to follow out their *amusements* on the Sabbath, it would not give them any advantage, over the religious world, in respect of pecuniary gain ; and, for that reason, it is not necessary, *upon the author's principle*, that amusements be prohibited ; nor does he admit the right of the magistrate to prohibit them.

The maintenance of this doctrine will, accordingly, be found essential to the argument of those who contend that a national government has no right to give its outward support to religion and its ordinances. But is it a doctrine for which the public mind of the religious world is at all prepared ? What would be the consequence, if, in our land, the laws which provide for the outward sanctification of the Sabbath were to be repealed,—with the single exception of what prohibits the transaction of worldly business with a view to worldly gain ? Would not the Lord's day become

—to the irreligious—not a time in common with others, but the peculiar and appropriate time—for amusements of every kind? What would be the effect of such an example on a young and rising generation,—upon the mind of many who, without such established principles as could resist its influence, had not previously abandoned themselves to vicious pursuits? It is painful to think of what we might, in this case, be called to witness; but it is better to anticipate evil than to turn away our eyes, until it overtake us. I therefore ask, more particularly, what security we should have in the case which has been supposed, that the Lord's day—as a time on which all worldly *business* would still be suspended—would not be henceforth the favourite time for all the sports of the field—which to the young are at present so alluring, and, in such altered circumstances, might prove to so many of them a fatal snare? If such were the prevailing occupations during the *day*, what security should we have against their being followed, at *night*,—perhaps by dancing assemblies, perhaps by theatrical amusements? Players, indeed, might still be restricted, like other men, from earning their bread on the Sabbath. But what security should we have against a *liberal company of comedians*—liberal at least in name—very obligingly contributing to the amusement of their friends, and trusting very safe-

ly to their being remunerated in a way which the magistrate could not so detect as to bring them under the penalty of the law ?

Extravagant as these suppositions may seem, there is nothing to prevent their being realized, if, for the purpose of subverting ecclesiastical establishments, we shall accede to the *principle* that our national government has no right to interpose its authority for the support of religion and its institutions. The adversaries of an established church are quite aware that they must either maintain this *principle*, or abandon their argument ; and we have seen that one of their number has been willing to concede very much, indeed ! for the purpose of maintaining it. But it may be fairly believed that he has not been duly aware of the consequences ; and it may also be hoped that deliberate reflection will convince both him and others that it is better to abandon what cannot be *safely* maintained, than to persist in contending for a measure which involves such ultimate hazard.

In the meanwhile, it is our duty to examine their argument in all its bearings, and with this view to consider, in the next place, the objections which have been either most commonly or most strongly urged against admitting that ecclesiastical establishments have that sanction of Divine authority, which, in the preceding pages, it has been our object to prove that they possess.

## CHAPTER II.

ON THE OBJECTIONS TO THE ARGUMENT FOR DIVINE  
AUTHORITY.

MANY objections, either to the separate branches of the evidence produced, or to the separate conclusions derived from each, have been examined and answered in our progress. But there is a class of objections applicable to the whole argument for Divine authority, of which it was necessary to postpone the consideration, till the reader should be in possession of all the evidence, together with the general conclusion, to which these objections are opposed.

The objections and arguments, to which I now refer, may be comprised under the following heads.

I. That there is no *precept* of the Gospel under which ecclesiastical establishments are required and enjoined, and that there was no such esta-

blishment for 300 years after Christ's ascension to Heaven.

II. That Christ himself declared that his kingdom is not of this world.

III. That civil governments are not competent to specify a religious creed which ought to be preferred and sanctioned, and cannot, therefore, be supposed to have Divine authority for that purpose.

IV. That the maintenance of any particular scheme or system of religion, as distinguished from others, at the public expense, and consequently more or less at the expense of dissenters, is antisciptural, unjust, and a violation of the rights of conscience.

In the following *sections*, these objections and arguments shall be considered in their order.



## SECTION I.

ON THE OBJECTION THAT THERE IS NO PRECEPT OF THE GOSPEL UNDER WHICH ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS ARE REQUIRED AND ENJOINED, AND THAT THERE WAS NO SUCH ESTABLISHMENT FOR 300 YEARS AFTER CHRIST'S ASCENSION TO HEAVEN.

IT will not be difficult to account for the two facts which this objection comprises, in a way perfectly consistent with what I have hitherto maintained ; but it will be convenient to begin with a consideration of the *second*, because an explanation of what relates to it will aid us in reference to the *first*.

During the apostolic age, the gift of miracles, as imparted to those who preached the Gospel, in some measure superseded the importance, or at least the necessity, of outward and worldly means for the accomplishment of the purpose of Heaven. But, after the age of miracles had passed away, —Was there not, (it will be asked,) all the need that there can now be, for the outward and hu-

man aid of ecclesiastical establishments, or, in other words, for the friendly interposition of kings and others in authority? If it was the purpose of Heaven that the visible church should thereafter enjoy such aid, why was it so long withheld?

These questions seem to proceed upon the supposition that, at the period referred to, a friendly interposition of civil power might have been extended to the Church *in the ordinary course of things*, or without any preternatural agency for the accomplishment of the object. But, how stands the fact? Were there any kings or other rulers who had at that time embraced the Christian faith? If there were not, how was it possible that they should so exercise their functions in aid of the Church of Christ, as to lay the foundation of an ecclesiastical establishment? It may be said that all things are possible with God—that, if he had seen it wise, he might have disposed their hearts both to embrace the faith of the Gospel, and to maintain its interests in the world. But it is obvious that, under the moral government of God, there are limits set to the use or employment of preternatural agency; and what these limits ought to be, in reference to any particular case, it belongs not to us to judge. I admit that, without any thing like the outward appearance of a miracle, ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> influence, which

converts any man to the faith of the Gospel, might have disposed the hearts of kings and others in authority to give their countenance and support to the Church of Christ, during the earliest ages. But if, in reference to the point in question, we allow ourselves to reason upon this ground, where is such reasoning to end? May we not argue, with equal propriety, that it was in the power of God, from the beginning, to make Divine influence effectual, in all cases, for superseding the use of all outward means and outward agency? In what concerns the ways of God, we can safely judge of what was right or fit for him to do, only from what we know him to have actually done. We know that, in fact, he permitted kings and others in authority to remain, for a long period, deaf to the calls of the Gospel, and of course morally incapable of contributing to the advancement of its cause in the world. But there was nothing in this case incompatible with what might have been anticipated in the ordinary course of things, nor any thing to forbid the supposition that, when God, in his great mercy, should be pleased to bring kings and other rulers to a saving knowledge of Christ, he would also be pleased to employ them as his servants for the advancement of the cause of Christ in the world.

So far, indeed, as we may venture to reason

concerning the ways of God, the argument may be placed on higher ground ;—and, with this view, I would ask,—whether it be unnatural to suppose that, in order to the permanent establishment and maintenance of the faith of the Gospel, God was pleased, in the first instance, to present a striking example of the vanity of all that man could do in opposition to it, by permitting the powers of the world not only to combine for its overthrow, but to continue their efforts against it, so long as should be requisite for rendering their ultimate defeat a more signal manifestation of his overruling providence in its behalf.

If this supposition be admitted, it will supersede, at once, all inference unfavourable to our argument, as arising from the fact of there having been no ecclesiastical establishment for the first 300 years. But, for this very reason, a tacit acquiescence in what I have supposed, is not to be expected.—It will be said that the supposition which I have made is but a theory of my own mind—perhaps a presumptuous theory. But I have the satisfaction of presenting it as a theory suggested, and, in my apprehension, upheld, by the revealed counsel of Heaven.

In support of what I now maintain, I have only to refer to some additional circumstances of that interesting prophecy, which is contained in the 2d

Psalm, as undeniably applicable to the promised Messiah, and to his spiritual kingdom.

We have already seen that, in the beginning of the psalm, kings and other rulers of this world are represented as conspiring against the Lord and his anointed, and that, in the end of it, they are admonished to serve the Lord with fear;—an admonition to which, in another psalm, they are represented as ultimately giving obedience. But there is an important part of the prophecy in the 2d Psalm, to which I had not formerly any occasion to allude. The inspired author, after describing the impious combination of kings, and others in authority, adverts to the conduct of that Great Being against whom they had “set themselves. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” For a time, the Divine Being is represented as only treating them with scorn. But it is added that “then,” or afterwards, “shall he speak to them in wrath;”—and, having “set his king,” (or the Messiah as a king,) “on the Holy Hill of Zion,” he promises to give him the “Heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.”

It would not be easy to imagine prophecy more descriptive of the Divine procedure in reference to the powers of this world, so long as they were

opposed to Christ and his visible church,—or prophetic language that could more naturally lead us to regard it as the purpose of Heaven that the presumptuous attempts of the Roman emperors in particular,—considered in connection with the utter failure of their attempts, to resist the progress of the Christian faith,—should at length have the effect of teaching others in authority to “serve the Lord with fear, and kiss the Son lest he be angry.” We know that the historical facts are conformable to what I now suppose to have been the Divine purpose. And, considering the case in this view,—the circumstance of there having been no ecclesiastical establishment for about 300 years, seems to be far, indeed, from giving us ground to suppose that kings and other rulers, who had profited by the lesson afforded in the case of those who had gone before them, were not to be honoured as instruments in the hand of God for advancing the interests of his spiritual kingdom. We are, on the contrary, encouraged to contemplate the wise and benevolent purpose of Heaven in regard to them as effectually accomplished,—the necessity for a more overpowering and more exclusive dispensation of Divine influence as thereby superseded,—and the visible church of Christ as, in consequence, settled on its present foundation,—as deriving all that it

enjoys from its invisible head, yet indebted, under him, for its outward support, to the powers which he hath ordained. It is in this way that the mystery of prophecy respecting the promised Messiah and his church upon earth is at once explained and fulfilled. The "rulers," who had at first opposed him, are made an example of folly and infatuation to those who come after them; men invested with authority are thereby made "wise or instructed;" and the kings of the earth, in offering their "gifts, fall down before him."

If the ground upon which I have thus accounted for there being no ecclesiastical establishment, during 300 years of the Christian era, shall be sustained as satisfactory,—we can be at no loss to account for the additional fact—that there is no *precept* of the Gospel under which ecclesiastical establishments are directly required and enjoined.

There are various things conformable to the will of God, which, from the nature of the case, cannot be the subject of precept. I might appeal, for illustration, to the case of particular and distinguishing friendship, which, though highly creditable to human nature, could not be absolutely enjoined or commanded,—because it is not, like truth or honesty, a virtue which it is either equally or certainly in the power of every man to

cultivate and maintain. But, in reference to ecclesiastical establishments, the objection to a *precept* was still more decisive; for, up to the time when the canon of New Testament Scripture was closed, the Christian world had not the possession or command of what is *essential* to such an establishment. The case to which we have last adverted,—the important fact that, at the time in question, the powers of this world were hostile to the Christian cause, rendered it morally impossible that any precept should be obeyed, under which an established church could have been required in the meanwhile,—or without a change of circumstances. I have accounted, I trust satisfactorily, for the condition in which the visible church was thus left for a time; and it must be obvious to every mind that, if, in such circumstances, there had been any precept respecting church establishments, the object proposed by it must have been prospective and distant. The precept must, in consequence, have been accompanied with a detail of all the future circumstances, under which alone it was to become obligatory on any Christian community;—and I need scarcely add that this would not have been analogous to the way in which the commands of Heaven are in any other case expressed and delivered. In all other cases, in which the letter of precept fails us,



we are left to ascertain the counsel and will of God, in a way similar to that by which we have both enquired after, and found, Divine authority for ecclesiastical establishments.

It seems unlikely, indeed, that, even in different and more favourable circumstances, the establishments in question should have been at all the subject of *precept*. For it is not easy to perceive how Christians could have been *enjoined* either to institute or uphold such establishments, without a more precise statement or specification of all that they ought to comprise, than would have been consistent either with expediency, or with the design of Heaven. It seems to have been the purpose of God that it should be left in the power of men so to modify ecclesiastical establishments, as to accommodate their elements in a great measure to the peculiar circumstances of every particular age or country. It is in this way that their practical utility is most effectually advanced ;—and it was, by leaving men to build on the foundation of such lessons as those to which we have adverted in the preceding argument, that the Divine purpose, in this respect, was to be best fulfilled.

It is maintained, however, and with much seeming confidence that, while we have no precept for ecclesiastical establishments, we have scriptural

authority for pronouncing them incompatible with the nature and design of the Gospel-dispensation. To this objection, therefore, our attention shall be next directed.

## SECTION II.

ON THE OBJECTION THAT CHRIST HIMSELF DECLARED THAT  
HIS KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

FROM the words of our Lord, to which the title of this section refers, it has been very confidently argued—not only that his kingdom is in itself spiritual—a proposition which will not be denied—but that its spiritual nature is a reason against our promoting its interests by such worldly means as are employed under an ecclesiastical establishment;—and, with the same view, some reference has been made to these corresponding words of Paul—“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds.”\*

The real import of the words of Christ will, in this case as in others, be best ascertained by a reference to the circumstances in which they were spoken. Much of his Divine instruction is histo-

\* 2d Cor. chap. x. ver. 4.

rically communicated to us ;—it is communicated in the course of the narrative which the Evangelists give of the events of his life, and the circumstances in which he was placed ; and the language in which he was accustomed to express himself is so accommodated to these circumstances as to render a strict attention to them indispensable, in order to a just interpretation of his words.

In the court of Pilate the Roman governor of Judea, Jesus was accused of having forbidden his countrymen to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself was Christ a king. Pilate, in consequence, asked him—"Art thou the King of the Jews?" And Jesus answered in the affirmative, but added "*My Kingdom is not of this world.*"\*—Who does not perceive that the single object of this declaration was to disavow all pretension to such temporal authority as could absolve the Jews either from their obligation of paying tribute to Cæsar, or from their allegiance, in any respect, to him as their earthly sovereign? The religion of Christ, so far from absolving subjects from their allegiance to the potentates of this world, was to lay them under a new obligation to such allegiance, as they desired to maintain a good conscience towards Christ himself as their spiritual king. It was, therefore, impossible that the charge brought

\* John, chap. xviii. ver. 36.

against him should not be repelled in the way which we have seen ; nor can it be regarded as reasonable, in the circumstances of the case, to attach any other meaning to his words than what has been already stated as applicable to the charge in question.

These observations have been thought necessary, because, from the frequency with which the words to which we have adverted are reiterated in our ears, there seems to be some mysterious importance attached to them. But, if nothing more be intended than a proof that the kingdom of Christ is altogether and exclusively spiritual, I both admit and maintain this position,—as established not only by our Lord's declaration in the case to which we have referred, but by the whole tenor of New Testament Scripture.

Upon this ground, therefore, let us meet the objection.

The kingdom of Christ is not only spiritual and Heavenly, but also independent. No earthly government has a right to overrule or control it. But does it follow that its interests cannot be affected by things which are outward and worldly ? Or that it may not derive advantage from the interposition of an earthly government in its behalf, for the regulation of such worldly things as may concern and affect it ? As a kingdom altogether

and exclusively spiritual, it does not of itself possess and exercise the powers which are requisite for this purpose ; nor does it seem easy to find a reason against its accepting the aid which may, in this case, be derived from the constituted authorities of the state, as themselves ordained of God.

If any civil government, under pretence of providing for the welfare of Christ's spiritual kingdom, shall usurp its peculiar and appropriate jurisdiction,—if a civil government shall attempt to direct the appropriate concerns of the visible church of Christ, by either superseding or controlling its separate and independent power, for the regulation of its own spiritual and inherent interests,—if a civil government shall pretend to regulate the administration of its ordinances, or to pronounce judgment on the qualifications of its ministers,—that government is so far an adversary of Christ and his cause in the world. But, if the civil government shall, on the contrary, abstain from intermeddling about such matters,—and shall, notwithstanding, contribute its outward aid towards the maintenance of religious ordinances, in the way which the office-bearers of the church have themselves approved and appointed,—if it shall so provide for the temporal wants of the ministers of Christ as to enable them to devote their whole time and labour to the exercise of

their spiritual functions, and shall, by the same means, extend the benefit of religious ordinances, more equally and effectually, to all who are under its charge,—*shall these things be regarded as subversive of the independence of Christ's spiritual kingdom?*

If, in the exercise of its power, the civil government be influenced, more or less, by a consideration of the benefit which it may itself derive from the salutary influence of religion on the hearts and lives of its subjects,—we, in this case, recognize a co-operation between church and state which has been sometimes denominated an *alliance*; and to such an alliance there are men who seem to have a decided objection. But why, or on what account, they object it is not so easy to perceive. They cannot have any objection to what the term *alliance*, abstractedly taken, imports. If an alliance be formed and maintained—only for the mutual good of the parties allied, one would think that it must be regarded as praiseworthy; and, certainly there is nothing but mutual good, in what we have now referred to as the purposes and objects of that co-operation or *virtual* alliance which may be understood as subsisting between church and state. If it embraces any terms or conditions of an opposite character, I know them not. Perhaps it will only be pleaded that the connection in question is

abused or perverted to bad purposes. But no man, it is hoped, will gravely contend that he has a right to reason, from an abuse, against the continued maintenance of what is both designed and calculated for good, and what only requires to be honestly and faithfully maintained, in order to its being productive of unmingled good.

I have seen only one argument in support of the objection now before us that I can regard as entitled to farther notice.—It has been argued that what the state undertakes to do for the church implies that *compulsory* means may be employed. Indeed, this is no more than what results from the nature of civil government in all cases ; it is an earthly power, or a government of temporal and worldly authority ; if its commands be not otherwise obeyed, they must be enforced by compulsory means. It is, therefore impossible to deny that so far as any thing is exacted from the subjects of a national government for the support of the church, the exaction must be enforced, if necessary, by such means.

Now, the argument of our opponents is that the use of compulsory means in any thing which concerns the church, is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. They do not choose to admit that things, which are temporal and



worldly, may outwardly concern the church, without constituting an essential part of the kingdom of Christ upon earth. That there is ground for such a distinction can scarcely be denied ; but they do not allow it either to supersede or to modify their conclusion. The question therefore is, whether they do or do not reason fairly ?

The civil government requires those, who are subject to it, to give their aid towards the support of the church ; and, if necessary, will oblige them to comply. But in what way is their aid required and exacted ? A concurrence with the church in all its ordinances, would certainly tend to support it ; but this is not exacted. If any such thing were required—still more if it were enforced by compulsory means, this would certainly amount to an interposition of temporal authority in Christ's spiritual kingdom. But what our opponents complain of, as *compulsory*, is a pecuniary contribution—a tribute in money, for the outward maintenance of what concerns the church ; and it is incumbent on them to shew upon what ground the means employed for enforcing this demand can be regarded as an intermeddling with what is spiritual.—Though the kingdom of Christ be in itself altogether and exclusively spiritual, we have already seen that its character in this respect is not incompatible with its being outwardly supported,

in a certain degree, by the use of outward and worldly means ; and, as to the *compulsory* nature of the measures to which the civil magistrate may resort for enforcing the exaction of a pecuniary tribute, it is quite sufficient to know that what he exacts is, in itself, temporal and worldly,—consequently, that, in making the exaction, he is acting strictly within his own province. How is it possible that his conduct in this respect can affect the spiritual nature and character of the interest which he desires to promote ?

The argument of our opponents seems to proceed upon a supposition that the two authorities in question—the worldly authority of the civil magistrate, and the spiritual authority of Christ,—are in a state of such collision and hostility, as forbids the latter to derive any aid from the former, even when the former confines itself strictly to its own province, in respect of the means of affording its aid ;—their argument seems to proceed upon a supposition that, in accepting any such aid, the spiritual authority of Christ is somehow violated or its honour degraded. But the very reverse is the fact. There can be no doubt that a corrupt and evil world is in a state of direct hostility to Christ, and that any co-operation between them, importing a mutual communication of benefits is impossible. But the civil magistrate, though his

power be of this world, is in respect of his office ordained of God as "a minister to men for good;" and, consequently, so far as regards his office, he is in a condition which perfectly qualifies him for such co-operation. It is, at the same time, a co-operation between two powers—the prerogatives and privileges of which are mutually recognised. The right of the civil magistrate—generally speaking—to employ compulsory means, for enforcing reasonable exactions of what is temporal and worldly, is unquestionably recognised by Christ as the Lord and head of his spiritual kingdom;—and, in such circumstances, nothing can seem more unnatural than to admit an exception from this general rule, upon the ground that any particular exaction is intended for the outward support of the Christian church, in a way which shall not at all affect either its spiritual rights and privileges, or its spiritual character and functions.

An attempt has, indeed, been made to enforce the objection which we have been considering, by a reference to some additional words of our Lord, when arraigned before the Roman governor. After stating that his kingdom was not of this world, Jesus added—"If my kingdom were of this world, they would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now

"is my kingdom not from hence."—It is argued that Christ here disavows all *fighting* in support of his spiritual kingdom; and it is at the same time maintained that compulsory means for its support must be regarded as "of the nature of *fighting*."

Most certainly I do not maintain that any attempt ought to be made to *compel* men either to embrace the religion of Christ or to make an outward profession of embracing it. But there is no call for explanation, at present, upon any such point. For the argument of our opponents, to which I now refer, will be found altogether inapplicable to the case in question,—if we only consider *who*, and *what* sort of persons, they were to whom our Lord alluded, under the denomination of *His* "Servants." It is evident that they were his Apostles and other Disciples who had followed him in the course of his ministry, and by whom it may be supposed that he was, at the time, more or less surrounded,—men who were not invested with any temporal authority whatever, but were bound, as the subjects of an earthly government, to submit to those rulers before whom their Master was arraigned. Had his kingdom been of this world, he would have been surrounded by men entitled to fight for him, that he might not be unjustly delivered to his enemies,

But "now" (says he) "my kingdom is not from hence;" and, therefore, I submit, and my servants also submit, to the procedure against me, however iniquitous, which has been instituted under the forms of law, and before men who are legally invested with authority.

Will any man say that our Lord's declaration respecting his "Servants" in this case, is applicable to the case of a civil government, lawfully ordained—not of men only but also of God—when enforcing by its authority a pecuniary exaction for the outward support of the Christian church?

Some to whom our Lord at this time referred, under the denomination of his "Servants," were invested by him with a far higher office than that of the rulers of this world; yet they did not disdain to appeal to civil magistrates, as men invested with earthly authority, for protection in the exercise of their functions, as teachers of his religion, with a view to the establishment of his spiritual kingdom. In some cases, however few, protection was, in consequence, extended to them; and the protection certainly implied that it would, if necessary, be made effectual, even by compulsory means, against any one who might still dare to commit such an outrage as would illegally obstruct them in their functions. From such protection of the civil magistrate, when obtained,

the spiritual kingdom of Christ derived more or less advantage ;—yet it has never entered into the mind of any man to contend that this outward advantage, as derived from the powers of the world, was inconsistent with the nature of Christ's kingdom, as in itself spiritual or *not* of this world.

Do not the servants of Christ, at the present day, whether they be members of an establishment, or dissenters, continue to derive advantage from the protection which is extended to them by the civil magistrate, against all who would obstruct them in the discharge of their public duty ? Is not this protection ensured to them by the knowledge which others have, that compulsory means will be employed, if necessary, for rendering it effectual ? These things cannot be denied ;—yet it has never been imagined that a worldly advantage thus secured to the cause of Christ, under the sanction of compulsory means, is incompatible with the spiritual nature of his kingdom.

The same account which I have given of those words of Christ, to which I have last adverted, will furnish a satisfactory answer to the argument which has been founded on the corresponding words of Paul,—“ The weapons of our war-

“fare are not carnal,” or worldly, “but mighty through God.”—To ~~whose~~ weapons or ~~whose~~ warfare are we to understand that the Apostle alludes under the appropriating term “*our*?” Most naturally to his own weapons and warfare, along with those of his fellow labourers in the ministry of the Gospel. But, supposing that he also refers to the weapons and the warfare of the *Corinthians* whom he addressed,—still that number most probably included none who were invested with temporal authority; nor can the Apostle’s declaration—for that reason—be regarded as applicable to the use which is made of such authority. Paul, indeed, and his fellow labourers were invested (as I have already said) with higher powers than those of any civil magistrate; and, to all the powers which they exercised, ~~his~~ description is strictly applicable; these powers were not carnal—they were “mighty through God.” But, while it is altogether inconsistent with any fair and natural interpretation of language, it would also require a fervid imagination indeed!—to suppose that, under the words in question, the Apostle referred to, and contemplated, the power which, at a future and distant period, civil magistrates either might or might not employ in aid of the visible church of Christ.

In short, from all that has been said under this head, I trust it is manifest that the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom is not incompatible with the conclusion at which we formerly arrived—that it is both the privilege and the duty of kings and others in authority, to give that outward support to the church, which we have recognized as essential to an ecclesiastical establishment.

It is not necessary to repeat here the arguments which have been already produced in support of this conclusion. It is sufficient to say, that the same arguments which have been already produced in support of this conclusion, will equally support the conclusion, that it is both the privilege and the duty of kings and others in authority, to give that outward support to the church, which we have recognized as essential to an ecclesiastical establishment.



## SECTION III.

ON THE OBJECTION AND ARGUMENT THAT THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT OF A COUNTRY IS NOT COMPÉTENT TO SPECIFY A RELIGIOUS CREED, WHICH OUGHT TO BE PREFERRED AND SANCTIONED, AND CANNOT THEREFORE BE SUPPOSED TO HAVE DIVINE AUTHORITY FOR THAT PURPOSE.

THE question involved in this objection may seem to call our attention to the origin of civil government. But, whatever has been the origin of any particular government—whether it originated in circumstances of an incidental kind, or in what has been called the right of conquest, or in what is more to be respected—some intelligible expression of the opinion and wish of the community, in whose behalf its functions were to be exercised,—there can be no doubt that *acquiescence* on the part of the community may at length entitle it to their respect and obedience. To prevent, however, the possibility of any misapprehension of what I regard as constituting a government, competent and authorized to specify and determine the religious creed which ought to be

preferred and sanctioned,—I desire to be understood as referring to such a government, and such only, as is admitted to be competent and authorized for all other ordinary purposes.

Now, it is clear that the great general purpose—the only reasonable one—for which any government can be either instituted or maintained, is the advantage of those who are subject to it; and, whether they have directly made choice of it, or have only acquiesced in what had been previously instituted, they must be understood as holding it adequate to all the ordinary functions of government.

Upon what ground, then, is it to be denied that the selection of a particular creed—a particular scheme or system of doctrine and worship—and, in conjunction with it, a particular form of ecclesiastical discipline, is one of the functions of government which men had contemplated, in either choosing the government under which they would live, or acquiescing in that under which they had been born? If this shall not be denied, it will follow that the general sense of mankind has been expressed on the competency of a civil government for the particular function to which we refer. I therefore repeat the question—upon what ground can it be denied that such has been the contemplation and understanding of men from the begin-

ning? Has not the settlement of all that constitutes an ecclesiastical establishment been one of the *customary* functions of a civil government, in which a great majority at least of all concerned have obviously acquiesced? From the time when kings and others in authority first embraced the Christian faith, there have been few exceptions from such procedure. I, therefore, hold myself entitled, in the commencement of this argument, to stand upon the 'vantage ground—that the general sense of mankind has already sustained the competency of a civil government for the duty in question. Indeed, this plea amounts to no more than what may be said in behalf of all that constitutes an ecclesiastical establishment; but, surely, this cannot weaken its application to the point now before us; it only strengthens all my preceding argument.

With this advantage, therefore,—though it may not be found very essential to our object—let us now examine the objection before us, in all its bearings.

If there is to be a religious establishment under the sanction of the state, religion generally considered cannot well be the object. Human laws can effectually provide only for what is special and precise; consequently it is only a particular scheme or system of religion that can effectually

receive the sanction of law ;—and it may perhaps be thought that the rulers of a state are not the best judges of this matter.

But it is altogether a mistake to suppose that the rulers of a state are to *devise* a scheme of either doctrine or worship. Before ecclesiastical establishments were constituted, the visible Church of Christ had been divided into a variety of *sects*, each of which had matured and digested for itself a scheme or system of all that concerns religion and its interests ; and, in this respect, the Christian world has continued the same down to the present day. Consequently, the rulers of a state are only called to judge between competing claims ; and for their aid, in forming a judgment, they have important advantages. Without entering into any technical discussions, which may be moresuited to polemical divines, they have it in their power to estimate and compare the practical effects of religion and its ordinances, as taught and administered in a variety of ways. If, as individuals, they have not been regardless of religion, they have the advantage of their own experience, along with a consideration of the grounds or reasons by which their adherence to any particular sect has been determined ; and, above all, they have the best means of ascertaining to what religious class the great body of the community is most inclined.

I have no hesitation in saying that, with these advantages, men possessing at the same time a fair portion of natural sagacity, and mingling with the mass of society in the ordinary intercourse of life, are more likely to form a right judgment of what ought to be preferred and sanctioned as a religious establishment, than any number of theologians, however deeply skilled in religious controversy. If it be the first duty and concern of any civil government to do justly, perhaps the second is to act discreetly, and, in the case to which we refer, the exercise of sound discretion is both what may be fairly expected, and what may be most safely trusted to for the public good.

Still it is contended that human governments are liable to err; and it has been asked—“Can this duty be suspended on any antecedent condition of so doubtful a nature as the rectitude of human judgment? If not, what is its basis?”\*

If the first of these questions is to be understood as implying nothing more than what it literally imports, my answer is that the duty of magistrates in reference to ecclesiastical establishments is not “suspended,” or made to depend, “on the rectitude of human judgment,”—that the well known fact of

\* Conder “on Protestant Nonconformity,” p. 507.

the human judgment being fallible, does *not* exempt magistrates from the obligation to exercise their judgment in the best manner they can, with reference to the point in question, and to proceed according to its dictates. But I am inclined to think that the two questions combined must be understood as implying—that we cannot reasonably suppose it to be the duty of magistrates to specify and determine the particular scheme or system of religion which ought to be established, without holding that duty to be dependent on an *unerring* exercise of human judgment—that, in fact, there is no other “basis” than an unerring judgment, on which the duty can be regarded as resting,—and that, as all human judgment is, on the contrary, liable to err, it cannot be the duty of magistrates to exercise the function in question.

To this argument I may certainly reply,—that, in the preceding pages, I have endeavoured to shew that the duty in question has a “basis” for which the author of this objection seems to make no allowance—the basis of Divine authority. But, as it may be thought that the argument now before us tends to undermine or weaken that *evidence* for Divine authority which has been previously submitted, it is, in this view, entitled to our attention.

It is certainly the right and duty of magistrates

to do what is conformable to the will of God. But the argument now to be considered implies that, on account of their liability to err, we cannot reasonably suppose that God has invested them with the authority in question.

Now, in what way, or upon what grounds may we, in this case, arrive at a safe conclusion? The safest way, I apprehend, in which we can judge of what God may be supposed to do, is by considering what, in other cases, he hath actually done. The argument opposed to us is in a great measure speculative; and, therefore, with a view to a safe conclusion, it is necessary to bring it down, as far as may be, to a practical bearing.

God is pleased to ordain civil magistrates, for temporal and worldly purposes. Their authority to this effect, as derived from God, has not been denied. Yet they are certainly liable to err in the discharge of the duty which is, in this respect, committed to them. In the discharge of this duty they may be supposed, from an error in judgment, either to command, or to exact, what is unjust. But, whatever doubt may hang over the rectitude of their judgment in reference to such cases, we do not deny that they are authorized of God; and that, in all ordinary circumstances, we are bound to obey them. Upon what ground, then, should we regard it as unworthy of God, to

commit to the same men, fallible as they certainly are, the right and duty of imparting certain exclusive privileges to such a scheme or system of doctrine, worship, and discipline, as in their judgment appears to be conformable to the Divine counsel and will? It will be said, and truly said, that the last-mentioned function is a more delicate and important one. But is there nothing in the other case to countervail this consideration? In the worldly case, the magistrate who errs in the discharge of his duty, may subject the people, or any part of the people, over whom he rules, to *very great hardships*, before they can be justified in resisting his authority. But, in the case of religion, the exclusive privileges, which he confers on the adherents of one system of religion, do not prevent others from worshipping God in their own way, or impose upon them any hardship which we shall find, upon inquiry, to be a grievous burden.

It is argued that "in civil controversies we are obliged only to external passive obedience, and not to an internal and active. We are bound to obey the sentence of the judge, or not to resist it, but not always to believe it just." These words of *Chillingworth*, have been applied by one author to the point now in question.\* But their

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, p. 144.



utter inapplicability must be manifest to every man, who only considers, for a moment, whether Dissenters in the present day be bound to give any such "internal" obedience, or to "believe" any thing otherwise than as their own minds direct them.

If it be still maintained that we have no right to argue from a worldly to a spiritual case,—let me ask, in the next place, whether ministers of religion be not ordained of God, for the spiritual instruction and guidance of those committed to them, and whether they be not also *fallible* men. Is the rectitude of their judgment to be depended on as affording absolute security against their inculcating—it may be unconsciously—such unscriptural doctrine as may endanger the spiritual and everlasting welfare of those whom they desire to profit? Or is there any security against their being guilty, in another respect, of direct injustice to those to whom they minister? Even among dissenters, the ministers of the Gospel are invested, if not individually, at least as members of a church judicatory,—with the power of withholding the benefit of the more solemn ordinances of religion from men who, in their opinion, have proved themselves unworthy. Yet it will not be pretended that there is any security against ministers of

religion being misled, in this case as in others, by an erroneous judgment.

There is no infallibility in this world. But God is pleased to overrule both the errors of men and the evils resulting from them, for the accomplishment of wise and gracious purposes. All his dispensations are accommodated to our imperfect character and condition, and especially to the imperfect capacities of those whom he invests with authority. The magistrates, whom he ordains as his "ministers for good," may proceed in a wrong course,—but no longer than he is pleased to permit. He says to them, as he does to the waves of the sea—So far shalt thou go and no farther. In this way the condition of magistrates in particular is more effectually rendered a state of trial and discipline; and, at the same time, the counsel of Heaven is ultimately fulfilled by that Almighty power which bringeth good out of evil.—To maintain, in these circumstances, that magistrates cannot be invested with authority to give the benefit of what is called an ecclesiastical establishment to such a scheme of religion as appears to them conformable to the Divine counsel and will;—to maintain, in such circumstances, that we cannot reasonably suppose them to be invested with this authority,—*merely because their judgment is not infallible*—will be found rather a difficult task.

I am aware that, in reference to the point in question, it may still be thought that we are placed in a *dilemma*. It is a possible thing, that the scheme or system of religion, which a government acknowledges and professes, may be different from that of a majority of its subjects ; and we are desired to say what the government ought in this case to do—whether it ought to establish what it professes and believes to be true, or a different and opposite system which, however false, has been embraced by a majority of those over whom it rules. It seems to be thought that the difficulty of answering this question, upon either side, in a satisfactory way, ought of itself to convince us of the incompetency of civil governments for the function in question. But my understanding is, that I am under no obligation to answer the question. It is true that a respectable author (Dr Paley) has chosen to answer it, by expressing his opinion, that it is “ the duty of the magistrate, in “ the choice of the religion which he establishes, “ to consult the faith of the nation rather than his “ own.”\* But it seems to me that the reply is altogether gratuitous, and that there are strong reasons why I ought not to make any answer to

\* Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Vol. ii. p. 334.

such a question as *generally and hypothetically stated*.

The purpose for which I write is exclusively practical; and the *question*, on the other hand, seems to be almost, if not altogether, speculative,—almost, if not altogether, without any fair practical object; for there seems to be little probability of a case occurring that would call for a practical solution of it. Even, with a view to the possibility of such a case occurring, the question ought not to be prejudged. It ought to be reserved, for being tried and judged with reference to its peculiar and distinguishing circumstances. Supposing the majority of a people, numerically considered, to differ from their rulers, in respect of religious opinion,—would there be no consideration due to the comparative intelligence of those who differed? or would there not be some consideration due to their condition, either (as, in some sense, a migratory population,) or as connected with their country by ties of a more indissoluble kind? To give an answer to the question, as generally put, without reference to these, along with many other circumstances, would be rash and inexpedient.—On the other hand, supposing that the question were to be regarded as *unanswerable*, what effect ought it to have on the result of our argument? Supposing it to be

found impossible, in any particular case, to determine whether the religion of the government or that of a majority of the people ought to be preferred, and that, in consequence, there should be no church whatever established in a country so unhappily situated,—most certainly all this ought to have no effect on those cases in which no such difficulty is realized. It is not essential to our argument to maintain that the Divine authority for ecclesiastical establishments is of such an imperative nature, as obliges men to institute them in every case that can, by any possibility occur; it is quite sufficient that we have a Divine warrant for such establishments, and Divine encouragement to institute and maintain them, in all cases which do not present an insurmountable obstacle. And, upon this ground, it is evident that any difficulty which may occur in a particular case, arising from a difference between the religion of a government and that of a majority of the community over which it presides, ought to have no influence on others.

But we must not, for this reason, look with indifference to one case, which, it is contended, brings home the question which we have been considering,—if not to ourselves,—to a large body of our fellow-subjects and the government under which they live.

It is contended that, in respect of the great body of the people of Ireland being Roman Catholic, it is an act of oppression on the part of a Protestant government to maintain a Protestant establishment in that country.

To this case it is impossible that we should refuse attention ; for it presents itself in a practical view, and lies open to be examined in all its existing circumstances. Yet it would not be easy to imagine a case which more strongly calls for being treated with caution and delicacy.

The anomalous condition of Ireland is in a great measure the result of its having been a conquered country. Though, for a time, the conquest was not productive of any question respecting its religious establishment, because the religion of its new rulers was the same with its own, the Reformation in England led to a case of extreme difficulty. After a Protestant church had been established in England, under the auspices of a Protestant government, the great law of self-preservation made it impossible for that government to permit the maintenance of a Catholic establishment in Ireland. For the prerogative asserted,—and not asserted only, but maintained—by the head of the Roman Catholic Church—the overwhelming prerogative of absolving subjects from their allegiance to an heretical sovereign,

made the prevalence of his authority in Ireland not only incompatible with the maintenance of an English government in that country, but inconsistent with the safety of the same government at home. It is believed that the great body of the Irish population has always been, not only Roman Catholic—not Roman Catholic in the same sense only as some other nations are, with an understood reservation of rights and privileges,—but *Popish* in the strictest sense of the word—devoted to the Pope *unconditionally*. It cannot be matter of wonder that, in such circumstances, a Protestant government, actuated by the principle of self-preservation, even endeavoured to strengthen itself against the usurpations of the Roman Pontiff, by such an ecclesiastical establishment in Ireland as might tend to strengthen the Protestant interest.

But whatever opinion may be entertained of either the justice or the policy of this measure, there is now such a change of circumstances as removes all difficulty, by presenting the question before us in a very different view.

Ireland has been incorporated with England and Scotland as an integral part of one united kingdom. The incorporation or union has been effected with all such consent on the part of Ireland as the circumstances of the case admitted.

Consequently, the population of Ireland is now to be considered in no other view than as a part of the population of that empire with which it is consolidated, not only under one executive government, but under one legislature. The great majority of that population is Protestant; and the same laws must govern the whole, with the exception of such cases only as have been otherwise provided for under the contract of Union. The kingdoms, though originally separate, being now one and indivisible, as well might the population of any particular *county or shire* lay claim to a peculiar ecclesiastical establishment for itself, as that Ireland should make a separate and peculiar claim, with reference to the majority of its own separate population.

It is vain to plead, in opposition to this argument, that Scotland, though united with England, has a separate and different church establishment. The maintenance of the Church of Scotland in all its rights and privileges, as previously established, was most carefully provided for, in the solemn act of its union with England; and there was no difficulty found in accomplishing this salutary purpose, because there was nothing in the constitution of the Church of Scotland unfriendly to the civil government of the country—no foreign potentate lording it over the consciences of the peo-



ple in a way calculated to endanger the government.—On the other hand, the condition of Ireland, as it has now been explained, makes it evident that no injustice is done to its Roman Catholic population, by the maintenance of a Protestant establishment which leaves them in the condition of other dissenters. In maintaining such an ecclesiastical establishment over the whole of the united kingdom, the government exercises no function of a dubious or questionable kind. The objection against a civil government maintaining a church different from that to which the majority of its subjects belong, is in this case, clearly inapplicable;—and it will be seen, in the proper place, whether the hardship to dissenters, so loudly complained of as resulting from an established church, be not more imaginary than real.

I now proceed to the last branch of the argument (so far as I know) by which it has been maintained that a civil government is incompetent to determine what particular scheme or system of religion ought to be the object of an ecclesiastical establishment.

It has been said that, “if it be the duty of Protestant governments to establish Protestantism, it must also be the duty of Roman Ca-

“ tholic governments to establish popery, giving  
“ to the thousand abominations of antichrist the  
“ authority of law ;” and that, “ if it be the duty  
“ of Christian governments to establish Christia-  
“ nity, it must also be the duty of Mussulman go-  
“ vernments to establish the countless *nugæ et de-*  
“ *liramenta* of their filthy imposture, and of Pagan  
“ governments, in all quarters of the world, to do  
“ the same thing for their bloody and barbarous  
“ superstitions.”\*

The argument seems to be that the establishment of a Roman Catholic church, or any corresponding establishment of what is peculiar to the religion of either Mahometans or Pagans, must be regarded as iniquitous, and have much iniquitous effect,—that Roman Catholic, Mahometan, or Pagan governments must be answerable for such iniquity,—yet that the same reasons, by which we justify “ a Protestant government for establishing Protestantism,” would justify Roman Catholics, Mahometans, and Pagans, for establishing the religion which they profess,—and, consequently, that Protestant governments can have no real authority for such establishments as we defend.

Now, in order to our judging of the validity of

\* “ Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered,” p. 139.

this argument, it is essential to ascertain how, or upon what ground, Roman Catholic, Mahometan, and Pagan governments may be regarded as chargeable with iniquity in establishing what is false.

If any government, with a knowledge and understanding of what is true, establish what is false, there seems to be an obvious principle upon which it may be charged with iniquity ; but the question is upon what grounds Roman Catholic, Mahometan, and Pagan governments are to be regarded as chargeable with iniquity for establishing what is false, *while they believe it to be true.*

The belief of what is false in religion—more especially such a belief as is realized in some of the cases referred to,—certainly implies an *unbelief* in what is true—an unbelief in the pure and unsophisticated doctrine of the Gospel as taught by the Son of God ;—and we know it to be the counsel of Heaven that unbelief is a ground of condemnation. It is not therefore a sufficient defence of the governments in question to say that what they do is conformable to what they believe. They *may* be answerable for an erroneous belief, and, in this case, are also answerable for the iniquitous consequences resulting from it. But no man is answerable for either belief or unbelief that is the result of necessary or involuntary ig-

norance ;—no man is answerable for what is exclusively an error of the understanding, or does not originate in what is wrong and perverted in the heart and its affections.—For what I thus maintain, we have the highest authority—the direct authority of the words of the Son of God. After acquainting Nicodemus that men should be condemned for unbelief in himself and his doctrine, he distinctly explains what is implied in this ground of condemnation, by tracing the condemnation of unbelievers to the unrighteous *cause* of their unbelief. “He that believeth not” (says he) “is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And *this* is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, *because their deeds were evil*. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reproved.”\* —There can be nothing more evident than that our Lord here refers the condemnation of men—to their unbelief, indeed, as the proximate cause—but to their evil deeds and a persevering attachment to what is evil as the radical cause,—and that it is only as unbelief has a perverse and unrighteous origin that he declares it to be a ground of condemnation.

\* John, chap. iii. verses 18, 19, 20.

How, then, does this explanation affect the case of Roman Catholic, Mahometan, and Pagan governments in establishing what is false, *while they believe it to be true*?—If an erroneous belief or unbelief has been, in their case, unavoidable,—if it has been the result of necessary or involuntary ignorance,—if it has not originated in a corrupt and perverse state of the heart and its affections,—their erroneous belief or unbelief (for the latter, as I have said, is implied in the former) does not subject them to condemnation, in terms of the authoritative explanation given by our Blessed Lord. But if, on the contrary, they have loved *darkness* or ignorance of the truth, rather than *light* or the knowledge of what is true, “*because their deeds have been evil*,”—if they hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their evil deeds be reprov’d,—then are they liable to condemnation, not only for their erroneous belief or unbelief, but for all its unrighteous consequences, and, among others, for establishing a religion which they ought to have known to be false.

In what way, then, are we to judge (if it be really necessary to judge) whether Roman Catholic, or Mahometan, or Pagan rulers, in the event of their establishing what is false, are truly chargeable with iniquity, on account of what they have done, as connected with the belief or unbelief from

which their conduct has proceeded? The only ground, (so far as I know,) on which, without seeing into their hearts, we can charge them with iniquity,—because the only ground on which we can charge them with a dishonest belief, proceeding from unrighteous dispositions, and consequently inferring condemnation,—is at least very doubtful and precarious,—nothing more than *that of their having believed WHAT WE KNOW to be false*. Consequently, my answer to the objection, as originally stated, is equally simple and decisive, —That it does not concern my argument, whether, in such a case, their conduct has, or has not, been iniquitous,—because it is plain that, by us at least, Protestant governments cannot be convicted of iniquity on the same ground. They proceed upon a belief of what *we know* to be true, and, under the influence of that belief, establish what we know to be true. Is it possible that we can regard them as wrong in doing so, merely because other governments have established what we know to be false, and, in doing so, *may* have been actuated, not only by a false belief, but by a belief originating in such a hatred of what is good, and such a love of what is evil, as renders them answerable, both for their belief itself as iniquitous, and for the iniquity of all its consequences? To infer, from the latter case, that there is also ini-

quity in the former, is so manifestly an error, that no man, I think, after considering the distinguishing circumstances of the two cases, will persevere in the argument.

But it is only, with reference to *Roman Catholic* governments, that I have thought it essential to make such a statement. For, so far as concerns Mahometan or Pagan rulers, the objection as urged has not even the shadow of any bearing on the argument which it is brought forward to subvert. I have argued and concluded, from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, that Christian magistrates have, in these Scriptures, a Divine authority for ecclesiastical establishments; and, most certainly, that Divine authority has a distinct and exclusive reference to the *Christian* faith. It is not an authority, generally speaking, for establishing something under the name of religion. It is, strictly and exclusively, an authority for the establishment of the religion contained in those Scriptures from which the authority is derived. How then is it possible that any thing in the case of Pagan and Mahometan rulers either establishing, or declining to establish, what they call religion, should affect the *Scriptural* warrant of Christian rulers, or so bring its reality into question as to induce any man to doubt or deny it?

Pagan or Heathen magistrates are either altogether ignorant of those Scriptures from which Christian rulers derive their warrant and authority, or they refuse to acknowledge the Scriptures as a revelation from Heaven; to them the Bible, which we have in our hands, is altogether a sealed book. To them, therefore, it practically imparts no warrant of any kind. But, admitting that it, notwithstanding, contains,—though unknown to themselves,—a warrant or authority to them respecting other matters, it assuredly gives them no warrant to establish the rites of Pagan or Heathen worship. What, then, becomes of the argument that “if it be the duty of Christian governments to establish Christianity, it must also be the duty of Pagan governments, in all quarters of the world, to do the same thing, for their various bloody and barbarous superstitions?” So far as the argument in behalf of Christian governments is founded on Scriptural and Divine authority, it is evident that, from the first case, nothing can be inferred with respect to the last.

It may, indeed, be thought that, in reference to this point, there is a distinction to be recognised between Pagan and *Mahometan* governments, because Mahometans profess to believe in some part of the Old and New Testaments. But the distinction is altogether unavailing for the sup-



port of the argument opposed to us. Much of our argument for ecclesiastical establishments is derived from sacred writings which Mahometan rulers do not acknowledge. Even those parts of the Old and New Testaments, in which they profess to believe, they have so mutilated as to accommodate them to the Mahometan faith. And, in reference to the point, which, above all and of itself, is decisive, they are exactly upon a footing with Pagan or Heathen rulers;—they can have no authority from the Scriptures of either the Old or the New Testament to establish the rites of Mahomet, since it is not, as I have said, religion in general, but the religion of *Christ* in particular, of which these Scriptures authorize the establishment.—In these circumstances, I scarcely need to add that the duty which, under God, Christian rulers perform, in establishing the Christian faith, does not in any degree involve that absurd consequence in reference to Mahometan rulers, which has been rashly imputed to it.

I am not aware of any farther argument, by which an attempt has been made to prove that any civil government, such as that under which we live, is incompetent to specify and determine the particular scheme of Christian doctrine and worship, which ought to be preferred and sanc-

tioned. Much has, indeed, been said about *oppression* to which it is alleged that Dissenters are exposed, by means of an ecclesiastical establishment. But I have patiently waited for the time and place, in which that charge may be, once for all and fully, examined ; and for this purpose an opportunity will present itself under the next section.

## SECTION IV.

ON THE OBJECTION AND ARGUMENT THAT THE MAINTENANCE OF ANY PARTICULAR SCHEME OR SYSTEM OF RELIGION, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHERS, AT THE PUBLIC OR GENERAL EXPENSE, AND CONSEQUENTLY MORE OR LESS AT THE EXPENSE OF DISSENTERS—IS ANTISCRIP-TURAL, UNJUST, AND A VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE.

IF one may judge from the frequency with which this part of the case is adverted to by the adversaries of an ecclesiastical establishment, it must be understood as possessing in their view an importance paramount to every other. The oppression to which dissenters are said to be subjected, by what is exacted from them for the support of an established church, is so combined with almost every other part of their argument, as may tempt one to suppose that, but for this pecuniary consideration alone, every other objection to a church establishment would have been more easily overlooked. One author, indeed, to whose posthumous name and character no small importance has been attached, seems to announce it as the

single object and design of his work to compare established and dissenting churches in respect of the pecuniary means by which they are supported, and the natural influence of the two opposite principles by which they are in this respect distinguished.—“The author of the following enquiry,” (says he,) “who belongs to the most numerous class of dissenters in Scotland, has endeavoured to unfold, in the subsequent disquisitions, not, indeed, the general policy of dissenters—a task to which he is totally unequal—but the general principle by which their policy is chiefly characterized—their supporting the ministrations of religion at their own voluntary expense; and to compare it with the opposite principle which chiefly characterizes the churches of the establishment, which afford the ministrations of religion at the expense of the public. These principles control the very being and essence of both systems, and, if fairly examined, will enable us to decide respecting their propriety or impropriety without more trouble.” \*

Perhaps the reader may not think that the limitation of the subject imposed by this quotation presents a very dignified view of it. We have contemplated it in a variety of interesting views;

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, Pref. p. 2.

and in that most important of all bearings—its bearing on the counsel and will of God. Yet we are now told that the whole must be controlled by a consideration of pecuniary expense, and the way in which that expense ought to be defrayed. In such a restriction I do by no means acquiesce;—but, as the expense of maintaining ecclesiastical establishments, and the way in which that expense ought to be defrayed, are topics which may be fairly adverted to in the controversy, I desire to examine this part of the argument in all the views in which it has, to my knowledge, been urged.

The argument against the expense being defrayed by the public is, virtually and practically, an argument against any part of it being defrayed by dissenters. It will, therefore, be conducive to a distinct and lucid explanation of the case, to consider, in the first place, in what sense, and in what degree, it can be understood that the established churches of our land are maintained at the expense of dissenters,—and, in the second place, whether the procedure in that case can be regarded as either antisciptural, or a violation of the rights of conscience and the principles of essential justice.

It is well known that the revenue, denominated *tithes*, constitutes the principal fund out of which the expense of our ecclesiastical establishments is defrayed; and how this can affect one

out of a thousand dissenters—in Scotland, more particularly—is not very obvious. I doubt whether one out of a thousand would ever have supposed that his interest was affected by it, if his attention had not been recently called to views of the subject which are calculated to impose upon his imagination.

After what has been so often stated, I am almost ashamed to offer any *explanation* relative to tithes; but I feel that a brief explanation is essential to the continuity and the consequent effect of my argument.

We have already seen that tithes were devoted to the outward maintenance of the church of God, under both the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations; and, after the Christian church had the happiness to enjoy, in other respects, that protection and aid which had been promised, under “kings as its nursing fathers,”—a similar revenue, under the same name, was appropriated to its outward support. It matters little in what form, or at whose expense, this appropriation was originally effected. It is well known that, *from time immemorial*, a certain portion of the fruits of the earth has been reserved for the sustenance of the ministers of religion, and that the remainder only has been acknowledged as the property of the lords of the soil. The landholder’s right to his estate

conveys to him no right or interest in the tithes, unless accompanied with some special grant, or in virtue of some special provision, which has been made for that particular purpose. Now if they, who have, in all other respects, the property of the soil, neither do nor can lay any claim to that part of its annual produce, to which we now refer, it is not easy to perceive what claim to it can be urged by others in opposition to that of its present possessors. Were it not for experience to the contrary, one would have thought that the revenue arising from tithes, as enjoyed by the ministers of religion, should have given offence to none. That the interests of agriculture might call for a commutation of tithes, it could not be difficult to perceive; but that any plea should be urged for alienating the revenue in question from those to whom it had been immemorially appropriated, under a pretence that such an appropriation of it was injurious to others, was more than could have been very naturally anticipated. The dissenters by whom such a plea has been urged, do not pretend that the appropriation of tithes to the support of the church and its ministers takes any thing out of their pockets, or deprives them of any thing to which as individuals they would otherwise have a claim of right. But they are so patriotic as to have discovered that the tithes are public proper-

ty—in other words—the property of the nation,—that it is, therefore, in the power of the national government to take them from the church,—that they would be much better employed, if applied towards the payment of the national debt,—and that, as long as they are not so employed, all dissenters,—who, in common with others, pay the interest of our national debt,—are most unreasonably and grievously oppressed. Perhaps this source of oppression would never have been discovered, if ingenuity had not been sharpened, by a very eager desire to subvert our ecclesiastical establishments. To say the least, it might have been remembered—and some allowance might have been made for the fact—that, though ecclesiastical establishments were abolished, the ministers of religion must still be, in some way, supported. But, as it will be pleaded that this could be more economically done, it is requisite that we attend to the merits of the particular scheme proposed.

The tithes (it is said) are public property—not the property of the church but of the nation. And, in support of this assertion it is observed that, at the period of the Reformation, the revenue of the church was treated as national property, and applied, by means of the national authorities, to such purposes, secular or sacred, as they judged most expedient.\*

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, p. 94.



But the fact referred to, is not a **conclusive proof** of what had been asserted ; it only **constitutes** a case in which it is alleged that the **truth of the principle or position in question, was acknowledged or acted upon.** It is a proof that the **national authorities** asserted, to a certain extent, a **right to dispose of the property of the church.** But **national authorities** are liable to err, and, considering the agitated state of the public mind at the **period of the Reformation,** it would not be wonderful if it were to appear that they did err.

It is not, however, necessary to my argument to say that, in the case referred to, the **national authorities** erred in any great measure, or in a **great measure** committed injustice. Far less will it appear that they treated the **patrimony of the church** as public and national property, in the sense which has been maintained,—or in any such sense as to be at their absolute and gratuitous disposal. It will be found that, in what they did—with very little exception—they acted only as trustees of the property in question, invested with such powers over it,—limited in their extent,—as the nature of the case prescribed.

Acting as trustees, they took its annual fruits from the Roman Catholic clergy, because the **Roman Catholic church** was no longer that of the nation ; and, if they had not done so, they would

have been unfaithful to their trust; for it was not for the support of any other church than that of the nation that the management and control of the property was vested in them.—They, in the next place, applied to the support of the national churches as established, such a portion of the whole revenue as they conceived, whether justly or not, to be adequate; and, from the peculiar nature of their trust, they may have honestly conceived that they were not bound to apply to this purpose more than what they believed to be consistent with the real interest and utility of these institutions. Can such a measure be regarded as constituting a case in which the national authorities treated the patrimony of the church as at their absolute disposal, without any view to the purpose for which it was originally destined, and for which they were invested with the control over it? They may have erred in the exercise of their trust; but they did not avowedly abandon its object. They did not, as now proposed, abandon to secular objects the whole revenue with which they were entrusted for a very different purpose, and leave the national churches, which, as *wards*, had been committed to their care, destitute of all future and outward means of support. Perhaps the national authorities of England would have done better, if, in appropriating the *surplus* revenue of

the church, they had made it *reclaimable* for its original purpose and use, in proportion as circumstances might call for it. In Scotland, this part of the case was prudently managed. A certain reclaimable fund was recognized and set apart; and it has helped towards the gradual increase of livings which were originally small *indeed*! But no imperfection that we can trace, in the procedure of the government of either country, relative to this great and delicate subject, could have prepared our minds for that procedure being boldly brought forward as evidence that the patrimony of our established churches is public and national property, in such a sense as would warrant the legislature of the united kingdom to withdraw it,—root and branch,—from the great purpose to which it had been confidentially and immemorially destined; and to apply it, as they are now advised, for the payment of the national debt.

The principle, upon which this proposition is founded, if it were to be recognized in its full extent, might, perhaps, involve the interest of many who are not office-bearers of the Church.—It may be fairly asked whether any landholder in the country can shew a right to his estate that is less liable to be called in question, than such *immemorial possession* as that by which the right of the

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Church to a competent maintenance is in this case supported. It may also be asked whether, in the event of the right of the Church to its tithes being disallowed, the lay-impropriators of tithes will be able to shew cause why their impropriations also should not be forfeited.—But I am not so presumptuous as to pronounce judgment upon any such questions. I rather desire to admit that there seems to be some distinction between the right of the Church and that of individuals. The rights of individuals—such rights, I mean, as those to which we have referred—are vested in themselves and their heirs. And perhaps the Church cannot be understood as having heirs in such a sense as to admit of a similar investiture. But I hold it to be sufficient, for my present purpose that this distinction is of such a technical kind—so remote from those practical and liberal views by which a wise and prudent government is ordinarily actuated, as renders it morally impossible that any such distinction should be sustained as a justification of the violent measure which the adversaries of ecclesiastical establishments have ventured to propose.—Even supposing that there were no question of right to be surmounted, most certainly the combined wisdom of an enlightened nation, as exercised by its re-

presentatives, would not give its sanction to such a measure, without a deliberate and well-founded conviction that the good purposes, which an established church had been intended to serve, were altogether vain and illusory ; for, if these purposes be accomplished, even in a very imperfect degree, by an advancement of both the present well-being of human society, and the everlasting interest of the individuals who compose it,—the advantage thereby realized so far surpasses the pecuniary gains which could be made by its forfeiture, as to forbid all comparison in the view of a reflecting mind. The degree in which an established church actually serves these invaluable purposes,—and can alone continue to serve them,—will be the appropriate subject of inquiry, in the next chapter—an inquiry which cannot now be anticipated without involving the whole argument in a state of inextricable confusion. But it is believed that there are few readers (with the exception, it may be, of a part, and not a large one, of the dissenting body) who have not already such an understanding of those advantages which result from the ministrations of an established church, as will forbid them rashly to conclude that these advantages ought to be forfeited for any such purpose as that which its adversaries suggest,—more

especially when they are regarded as advantages realized to us by a conformity to what we have already seen to be the counsel and will of Heaven.

Tithes, however, do not constitute the whole of the revenue which is expended on the maintenance of an ecclesiastical establishment. In Scotland at least—whatever be the case elsewhere—the landholders are subjected to a considerable expense in building and maintaining parish churches, and *manse*s or dwelling-houses for the parochial clergy. But from the landholders we hear no complaint; because they know well—either that this burden is one to which their ancestors voluntarily subjected both themselves and their heirs, or that it is a burden which constitutes a part of the tenure under which they have since acquired their property. How this burden can be an oppression to others,—or to dissenters in particular,—is not very manifest; nor has any plan been hitherto devised, so far as I know, for such a conversion of it, as may render it helpful towards the payment of the national debt.

It is true that, in some cases, the proprietors of houses are liable to a proportionate share of the same burden. But they also must be understood to have either bought or built their houses

knowledge of this burden ;—they must be understood to have proceeded upon the principle that the price paid for the purchase, or the money expended on the building, *along with the permanent burden*, did not amount to more than it was their interest to give for the property acquired ; and, in this view, they are virtually in the very same predicament with that of the landholder.

Our attention is farther called to the peculiar circumstance—“ that in some towns, every householder of a certain extent of rent is assessed for the maintenance of the established clergy.”\*—So far as regards Scotland, the allusion must be, chiefly though not exclusively, to the established clergy of Edinburgh, of whom the author of these pages has the honour to be one. In these circumstances, it will not, I hope, be surprising that, upon this point, I say little. I trust that I shall never be guilty of any thing so mean and degrading as that of converting what I professedly write in vindication of a great and sacred cause, into an engine of either defending or promoting what concerns my own private and personal interest. But, on the other hand, I should feel that I was guilty of a partial dereliction of what becomes me towards the cause which I maintain, if I did not

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, p. 98.

state, in a single sentence—that, when the case shall be duly investigated, it will be found that the tax upon house rent, which is paid for the maintenance of the ministers of Edinburgh,—though levied from the *occupiers* of houses—is *virtually* paid—to every practical effect paid—not by those tenants or occupiers of houses who are not, at the same time, the proprietors, but by the proprietors alone and exclusively, whether they be occupiers or not;—in which case it is evident that the persons on whom the burden truly falls are no more subjected to hardship than those other proprietors of lands and houses to whose condition we have already adverted.

It remains, notwithstanding, to be admitted that, after a deduction of all the cases to which we have referred, the established churches of our united kingdom are still maintained *in some measure* at the public expense, and consequently more or less at the expense of dissenters. There is truth, though mingled with exaggeration, in the following statement of the same author to whom I have last referred. “It must also be remembered” (says he) “that, besides what is usually called ecclesiastical property, the established churches are *continually receiving*, as I have already remarked, large sums directly out of “the general revenue of the empire, and even out



“ of the pockets of private individuals. Only the  
“ other year, the church establishments of England  
“ and Scotland received not less than a *million*  
“ *Sterling* of the public money for places of wor-  
“ ship, besides receiving every year for their cler-  
“ gy—the former, we believe, one hundred thou-  
“ sand pounds, and the latter between ten and  
“ twenty.” \*

I have no disposition to correct this author's mistakes in respect of the pecuniary *items* of his statement. What he has stated is so far correct as to constitute a fair ground of argument; and it is right that his cause have the full advantage of it. Dissenters, so far as they contribute to the general revenue of our united kingdom, are subjected to a *part* of the expense of maintaining its two established churches; but to what does that part amount? I make no pretension, in such a case, to arithmetical calculation. But, with reference to the great body of the dissenters in Scotland (exclusive of the Episcopal communion,—the members of which, it is believed, take no part against ecclesiastical establishments)—I am inclined to think that, considering the outward condition of the great majority of the whole number, and the commendable lenity with which taxes are im-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, pp. 97, 98.

posed on the working classes of the community, it would not be easy to say, beforehand, to what denomination of coin a strict calculation would reduce the contribution which each of them annually makes towards the support of an established church.

Let it not, however, be supposed that this remark has been made with a view to evade the objection to ecclesiastical establishments, which is founded on the fact of such a contribution being exacted. Though its amount should be only a farthing, or less than a farthing, there is a principle involved in the exaction which I am pledged to defend ;—and I therefore proceed, as was proposed, to consider whether the burden actually imposed be *antiscriptural, unjust, or a violation of the rights of conscience.*

The ground upon which it is contended that the means employed for the maintenance of our established churches are opposed to a Scripture-rule, seems to be more equivocal and illusory than any to which we have hitherto adverted. We are told that we must go to the New Testament, “and that a moderate acquaintance with the contents of that book will direct us at once to what we are in quest of—‘ Who goeth a warfare, at any time, on his own charges ? Who planteth a vine-

“yard, and eateth not of the fruit of it? Who  
 “feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the  
 “flock? If we have sown to you spiritual things,  
 “is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal  
 “things? Do you not know that they who minis-  
 “ter about holy things live of the temple, and  
 “they who wait at the altar are partakers with  
 “the altar? Even so hath the Lord *ordained* that  
 “they who preach the gospel should live by the  
 “gospel.’ 1 Cor. chap. ix. ver. 7 14. “This brief  
 “extract,” (adds the author,) “which might be  
 “corroborated by many other passages of similar  
 “import, comprehends the fundamental principles  
 “of that *establishment* which Christ himself hath  
 “set up.”\*

The words of Paul, to which reference is thus made, amount to an unquestionable declaration of the right of the ministers of religion to a worldly recompense for their spiritual labour; but is there any thing in the passage quoted that can be regarded as either directly, or by implication, prohibitory of their being maintained or recompensed at the public expense? I desire to admit that the Apostle must be understood as pointing to voluntary contributions, as the only source from which it was possible that the recompense could be de-

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, pp. 171, 172.

rived, in what were then the circumstances of the Christian church. We have already seen that, for 300 years, it was impossible that there could be any ecclesiastical establishment; because, during that period, there was no civil government that had been prevailed upon to regard the Christian faith in any other view than as an imposture. In these circumstances, it is obvious that the ministers of religion could derive their recompense from no other source than the voluntary contributions of those to whom they ministered. It was scarcely necessary to produce scriptural authority for convincing us of what was so undeniable.—But does it follow that a change of circumstances might not fairly and properly lead to a change of system? When the visible church of God upon earth came to be once more recognised and countenanced by national authorities, was it unnatural that *they* should look back, for direction in their duty, to a time when the church had been placed in the same favourable circumstances, and had, under the Mosaic law, been liberally maintained at the public expense? Had the New Testament prohibited such a measure, either by distinctly prescribing an opposite and exclusive rule, or even by furnishing such an opposite example as did not originate in circumstances which had been completely changed, it would have been the duty of national authori-

ties to conform to it. But, in the absence of every such rule, it was as clearly their duty to look for guidance and direction to what had been unequivocally sanctioned of God, in outward circumstances similar to those in which his church upon earth was again placed.

They might, indeed, have hesitated in the discharge of this duty, if they had entertained any apprehension that to maintain the church at the public expense would be either *unjust, or a violation of the rights of conscience*. These objections to the measure had not been discovered, it would seem, till a later period; but they are now very confidently urged, and must, therefore, be considered in their order.

In the first place, it is contended that the measure is *unjust*, because dissenters are thereby required to contribute towards the expense of ministrations by which they do not profit. “We are “stript of our property” (says one dissenting author “and that to an enormous extent. Not “only does the poorest individual among us contribute individually, out of his hard earned pittance, to the expense of your establishment, and “of the still more sumptuous establishment of the “south—not only does the tax for that object, added to the load of other taxes, help to sink him in

“ the scale of comfort, and to diminish the quantity of that bread, for which he expends the sweat of his brow,—but such of our people as possess houses or lands, come in, as you well know, for their full share of the direct burden. This wears injustice on the very face of it.”\*

As to the proprietors of “ houses or lands,” I have already shewn, and I trust upon incontrovertible ground, that they sustain no injury ; and I will not repeat what has been so recently stated. Nor am I much disposed to reply to the *extravagant* language which has been quoted, by reminding the reader, of the very limited degree in which those dissenters, who are not proprietors of houses or lands, can be understood as contributing to the maintenance of our ecclesiastical establishments. The single question is whether their being charged with *any part* of this expense be a measure which involves *injustice* ?

They pay, it is said, for what does not, in any way, profit them. Even this position might be denied. For if it shall appear, as I trust it will, that the maintenance of an established church tends to the peace, the good order, and the general welfare of society, dissenters have, in this respect, a share of the advantage.—Supposing, however, that they do not profit, in any way, by the

\* Marshall's Letter to Dr Thomson, p. 56.

ministrations of the church, does it follow that the national government is to be, on that account, restricted from applying a part of the national revenue to a purpose which they conceive to be for the more general interest of the nation? Before this restriction be admitted in the particular case, we must be prepared to admit a corresponding restriction in other cases. But we should, in so doing, recognise a principle under which no government on earth could discharge its duty. It is the duty of every government to do what promises to be most conducive to the general interests of the society over which it presides—in that way, no doubt, which shall be least inconvenient and injurious to individuals,—but certainly not under the impracticable condition that its measures shall not be, in any respect, or in any degree, against the interest of any part or portion of the public.

Mr Conder, in his treatise on Nonconformity, has represented the maintenance of the established church at the public expense, under “the idea of a *bounty* upon a particular species of religious instruction.”\* Perhaps this term is not, in all respects, very appropriate. But we are indebted to Mr Conder for his using it, because it suggests, at once, a clear and decisive illustration of our present argument. The national government may

\* P. 526.

see it to be for the public good to bestow a *bounty* upon some produce or manufacture. Some individuals may be deeply engaged in importing the same article from a foreign country ; or their capital may be employed in some other manufacture, or the cultivation of some other produce, at home, the demand for which will be lessened by an increased production of that on which the *bounty* is bestowed. In this case they sustain a double injury ; they not only suffer in respect of the commerce, the manufacture, or the cultivation, in which they are engaged,—but, as members of the community, contributing to its general revenue, they contribute their share of that very *bounty*, by the operation of which they are materially injured. Yet they do not complain, because they either know, or ought to know, that it was the duty of the government to grant the *bounty* in question, upon being convinced that it was for the public or general interest.—Considering the great variety of ways in which the revenue of our country is very properly expended, it is impossible that there should not be many instances of its being partly expended in a way which, though calculated to promote the interest of some individuals, is prejudicial to that of others, by abstracting from them a part of their worldly gain,—and is, notwithstanding, for the public good. In all such cases,



the separate injury sustained is, upon the principle already explained, the *double* of what constitutes the ground of complaint in the case of our dissenting brethren; the very men who sustain the loss contribute to the revenue which is so applied as to be the occasion of that loss. Yet every national government must continue to employ the public money in the way which is most conducive to the public interest.

I do not forget that, in this case, our attention is still called to a distinction between things *secular* and things *sacred*, and that it remains for us to consider the objection which has been urged in behalf of dissenters, upon the ground that an exaction from them of any contribution, however small, towards the support of an established church is *a violation of their rights of conscience*.

Of all pleas and arguments which have been urged against any measure, the most important and sacred is that it tends to violate the rights of conscience. But, for this very reason, it has been, more than any other, rashly and presumptuously urged. It is therefore a plea which requires to be most *favourably*—yet most *cautiously* considered.

We have seen that the measure in question does not involve *injustice* to dissenters. But we

are asked whether it “never occurs to us that it  
“is a matter in which their consciences are concerned as well as their property ;” and, in explanation, the author adds—“Dissenters, I believe,  
“when they ask of themselves the question—whether it be right in the sight of God to pay the  
“tax demanded of them for the support of the  
“state religion, generally decide it in the affirmative, on the ground that the payment is not optional but compulsory, and that, for the application of money taken from them by compulsion, they cannot be responsible. This, however, is a view of the matter which, though it  
“satisfy some, may not satisfy all. Many a worthy person may have serious scruples, when he  
“considers in what manner the pittance which he  
“gives may be employed—that it may go, not to  
“the dissemination of truth, but to the dissemination of error—not to the saving but to the  
“ruining of men’s souls.” \*

It is not easy to judge how we ought to meet this objection. For, while the author, whose words have been quoted, seems to admit, for the reason assigned, that dissenters, “*generally*” do not violate the dictates of conscience, in contributing to the support of a national church, he is willing to make a reservation in behalf of some

\* Marshall’s “Letter to Dr Thomson,” p. 53.

whose consciences may be more tender. . But, as his most respectable coadjutors in the argument have concurred in restricting their plea,—as the author of a “ Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches” has even quoted the example of the Apostle Paul, for submitting “ to pay taxes “ under the Roman government, part of which “ was no doubt applied to maintain the established superstitions,”\* our reply may be fairly confined to the ground of objection, which this last mentioned writer has reserved ;—and, in few words, it seems to be that, though dissenters may conscientiously submit to the exaction, it is not lawful, in point of conscience, for any government to reduce them to the necessity of submitting to it.

This proposition implies that there is still a hardship imposed on their consciences, and that the government is still answerable, at the bar of conscience, for having imposed it.—But upon what ground is it maintained that there is any hardship imposed on a man’s conscience, by an exaction to which his conscience at the same time, directs him to submit? There may be *injustice* in a measure to which his conscience directs him to submit ; and the authors of the measure may be answerable for the injustice. But we have already

\* “ Comparison,” &c. p. 67.

seen, that the measure in question is not chargeable with *injustice*. How, then, does the man's conscience, in these circumstances, still suffer a hardship? One great part of the office of conscience is to convict us of sin and reprove us for it; but there can be no sin in our submitting when our conscience directs us to submit; we, in this case, obey the dictates of conscience, and have therefore its approbation. The utmost, it would seem, that can, in these circumstances, be pleaded—is that, while a dissenter submits to the exaction in question, his conscience disapproves of that exaction and is therefore *offended*.

How, then, should this consideration affect the conduct of any national government, in either enforcing or declining to enforce such an exaction? My answer in this case is very nearly analogous to that which I offered in repelling the charge of injustice,—it is that the principle, upon which national governments are advised not to enforce the exaction, is one which, if recognised as a rule of conduct, would preclude them from the discharge of many duties, which are so essential, that if their discharge were superseded, no government could be long maintained. Let me refer, for illustration of what I now assert, to the argument of an anonymous author in a late “Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments.”—“Is religion” (says he) “the

“ only subject over which conscience holds empire?  
 “ May we not plead conscience in refusing to pay  
 “ a tax, levied for the prosecution of a war, which  
 “ we conceive to be at once impolitic and unjust?  
 “ We may be of opinion with those who believe  
 “ the public money is used as an instrument of  
 “ bribery and corruption. Can we submit to sup-  
 “ port a system which thus violates the laws of  
 “ God? Is not our conscience here concerned as  
 “ well as our property? Quakers are, on religious  
 “ principles, opposed to all wars; yet they have  
 “ never pleaded exemption from those taxes which  
 “ have been levied for the national defence. A  
 “ class of the community, no less numerous than  
 “ this sect, are opposed, on Christian principles,  
 “ to the severe and sanguinary punishments of  
 “ our criminal code; yet they pay for the execu-  
 “ tion of every criminal, and for the support of  
 “ the judges by whom he is condemned.”\*

The only thing like an answer, (so far as I know)  
 that has been made to this argument, seems to be  
 comprised in the following words—“ When I speak  
 “ of persecution and the violation of conscience,  
 “ I refer exclusively to what is extorted for things  
 “ religious.”†

\* Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments, p. 65.

† “ Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches,”  
 p. 62.

Can any man sustain this as an answer? Not only are the cases and circumstances, to which the anonymous author refers, within the province of conscience, they unquestionably involve a *religious* objection. They do not, indeed, concern the outward and immediate worship of God; but is there nothing *religious* beyond what concerns the service of the sanctuary? Has religion no concern with our life and conduct in the world? Is the regulation of our conduct no part of religion? Do we not contravene the great principles of religious obligation, if either directly or indirectly we give any encouragement, which in our station we can avoid giving, to an unjust war in which the lives of thousands are sacrificed? Do we not manifest a disregard of religious obligation, if, in any way which we can lawfully avoid, we contribute towards promoting either bribery and corruption, or the subjection of men to such sanguinary punishments as, in our mind, we disapprove?—It is morally impossible for a national government to recognise a principle, which would exempt dissenters from the exaction in question, without acknowledging the same rule as applicable to all the cases to which we have now referred;—and it is equally evident that, if such a rule were recognised as universally or generally applicable, it would be

found very nearly, if not altogether, incompatible with the maintenance of any government.

Having now considered, and I trust satisfactorily answered, the objections which have been either most frequently, or most strongly, urged against our argument in behalf of ecclesiastical establishments, as founded on Divine authority, we may fairly proceed to the less laborious and more pleasing duty of illustrating the practical utility, and indispensable importance, of such establishments for advancing both the temporal and the spiritual interests of men.

## CHAPTER III.

## ON THE UTILITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

THIS department of the general question is essentially connected with the whole argument by which it has been maintained that we have *Divine authority* for ecclesiastical establishments. It would be *unnatural* to believe that what is not calculated to be useful to men is either required or sanctioned by God. If, on the other hand, we shall find that the establishments in question have a tendency to promote both the spiritual and the temporal interests of the great family of mankind, it may well have the effect to establish our confidence in the more direct evidence of their being warranted and authorized by our father in Heaven. Nor is it less certain that such evidence for their *Divine authority* as that which has passed under our review may, with good reason, incline us now to examine what concerns their *utility*,—though not with a partial eye—yet with such candour, and such patience, as may effectually secure us against any rash and unfair conclusion.



Let us, therefore, in this chapter, consider, in the first place, the evidence by which the utility of ecclesiastical establishments is supported,—and, in the second place, the objections to their utility which have been either most commonly or most strongly urged, by our opponents in the argument.

## SECTION I.

ON THE EVIDENCE FOR THE UTILITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL  
ESTABLISHMENTS.

EXPERIENCE is our safest guide in judging how far we may rely on the utility of any institution; and, in the present case, it will materially assist us.

When we look back on the history of the church, we find that, after miraculous agency was no longer employed in its behalf, the aid which it derived from the civil powers appears to have contributed essentially towards the propagation of the Gospel. So long as the men who preached the Christian doctrine were enabled to work miracles, as a proof that, in what they taught, they were authorised of God, their spiritual labour was successful, without the intervention of ordinary and worldly means. But, in proportion as miracles were more sparingly vouchsafed, the spread of the Gospel appears to have been less rapid;—and, after miraculous agency had altogether ceased, it seems to have been, in a great measure by an in-

terposition of civil power, in aid of the ministers of Christ, and as an instrument in the hand of their Heavenly Master, that the promises of a more general diffusion of the Christian faith received their gradual fulfilment.

How long the preaching of the Gospel was rendered effectual by accompanying miracles we have not the means of ascertaining with *much* precision. But we know that the writers of the second century continued to ascribe the rapid progress of Christianity to the extraordinary gifts which were imparted to the first Christians, and the miracles and prodigies that were wrought in their behalf, and at their command.\* Even during the third century, the success of the Gospel was still ascribed “to the healing of diseases, and other miracles, which many Christians were still enabled to perform.”† Very little time, therefore, can have elapsed between the *termination* of miraculous agency, and the era at which the ministers of the Christian church obtained the aid of civil authorities in their labour for the spread of the Gospel.—It is well known to have been at the commencement of the 4th century that the first Christian

\* Macdaine's Translation of Mosheim's Church History, Vol. i. p. 151.

† *Origen contra Celsum*, lib. i. p. 5, 7.—*Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. vii.

potentate ascended the imperial throne. And from this period onward, for several centuries, the Gospel appears to have made a rapid progress among the nations of the earth,—without the intervention of such miracles as had given effect to the labour of its first teachers,—but most certainly with the aid of Christian potentates, for strengthening the hands of those who were immediately employed in its propagation.

Even before the reign of the first Christian emperor, the church of Christ had received some aid from the potentates of the earth. We are told by *Eusebius* that, during the third century, *Origen* was invited from Alexandria by an Arabian prince, and that he converted a tribe of wandering Arabs to the Christian faith. \* But “the zeal and diligence” (says Dr Mosheim) “with which Constantine and his successors exerted themselves in the cause of Christianity, and in extending the limits of the church, prevent our surprise at the number of barbarous and uncivilized nations which received the Gospel.”†

It is not to be denied that, in process of time, after the Christian church enjoyed the protection and aid of the state, it was much and grievously corrupted, in respect of both its doctrine

\* Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. chap. xix. p. 221.

† Maclaine’s Translation of Mosheim’s Church Hist. Vol. i. p. 337.

and worship. Nor is it to be disguised that this great evil may have partly arisen from an *abuse* of that security which the church enjoyed under the fostering cares of civil and national authorities. But, considering the great variety of circumstances which may have combined for producing the evil in question, there is more presumption than wisdom manifest in ascribing it to any single cause. It is, besides, sufficient, for our present purpose, to remember that, in whatever degree the church may, at any period, have abused and perverted the protection and aid which it derived from the state, we cannot, for that reason, be warranted to disregard what is in itself a blessing, and what only requires to be duly improved, in order to its producing a blessed effect.

The great body of the people and nations which received the faith of the Gospel, under the ministrations of men who were protected and aided, in their outward labour, by the emperors of Rome and Constantinople, still profess themselves disciples of Christ. Much perversion, indeed, of the truth as it is in Christ unhappily prevails in both the Roman and the Greek churches. But shall we, on that account, say that it has been in vain that, with the outward aid of civil governments, the ministers of religion were enabled to bring *their* fathers to the faith of the Gospel? Is their condi-

tion, at this day, no better than that of men who had changed "the glory of the incorruptible God" into an image made like to corruptible men; and "to birds and four-footed beasts, and to creeping things?" God forbid that we should not recognise an important distinction! The people who now belong to the communion of both the Greek and Roman churches acknowledge and worship one God, and one primary and great Mediator between God and man. In short, they seem to believe all that we believe; and, though, most unhappily, they believe a great deal more which has no foundation in the Scriptures of truth,—shall it be pronounced of no importance—*by fallible men such as we are*—that they look, for the salvation of their immortal souls, to the true and living God, through the Saviour whom he hath revealed? Shall it be pronounced of no importance—that an interposition of civil government, in aid of the ministers of Christ, was helpful towards delivering their fathers—and consequently delivering themselves—from all the horrors of pagan superstition,—even to the effect of such an imperfect change in their condition as that which is now realized?

It is not consistent with the counsel and will of God that any thing like perfection should be exemplified in the moral and religious condition of

men in this world,—far less that our approaches towards it should be so rapid as to incline our hearts to presumptuous confidence. But there is a gradual progress in moral and religious improvement, to which the course of providence has been long directed; and we have good ground to hope that what ecclesiastical establishments, or the church with the aid of the state, originally achieved in behalf of the Christian faith, by the conversion of so large a portion of the heathen world, will not be ultimately unavailing towards hastening that happy time when all men shall worship the true God in the divine simplicity of truth.

Have we not experience of a progress—however slow it may seem—towards this blessed consummation? Some of those nations which, after receiving the Gospel in the way which we have seen, had gradually corrupted the truth as it is in Jesus, have already returned to the faith and profession of pure and undefiled religion; and, in so doing, have been countenanced and encouraged by their national authorities. In some countries, where the Protestant faith is now firmly established, it is impossible that good men should not look back, with gratitude and delight, to the zeal and effect with which their respective governments became aiding towards the vindication of the Christian doctrine and worship, from the errors

and corruptions of the church of Rome. Is not such a progress well calculated—not only to encourage our hope of a more universal prevalence of unadulterated truth, but to engage us also to place a just confidence, for that purpose, in such an *outward* agency of national authorities, as God has been hitherto pleased to bless for the advancement of his kingdom on earth.

In the meanwhile, do ecclesiastical establishments appear to serve the purpose for which they are designed, in those countries where pure and undefiled religion is already professed?—Much imperfection, no doubt, is manifest in their operation and effect, arising from the imperfection of the visible agents or instruments employed. But the question is whether there be not, at the same time, much undeniable benefit resulting from them;—and such benefit as we have ground to think could not be realized in any other way.

The adversaries of a church establishment will not say that the labour of the established clergy is altogether useless. But they seem to maintain that, if there were no establishments, the ministers of what they call *voluntary churches* would do more good than is now done by their own labour and that of the established clergy combined.—This wears the aspect of a very bold position; for,



though it may be fairly supposed that, in the absence of established clergy, there would be an accession to the number of other teachers, it does not so clearly appear that the aggregate number of the ministers of religion would either be greater than it now is, or adequate to the necessities of the case.

It is manifest that, if there were no church establishment, the *supply* of ministers of religion must be proportioned to the *demand* for their services. It is impossible that men should devote themselves—their whole time and labour—even to the good work of the Lord—without such a remuneration as may provide for them, at least the necessaries of life. The question, therefore, is whether, in the event of church establishments being superseded, the demand for the ministrations of religion would prove adequate to the spiritual *wants* of the community, and thereby secure a proportionate supply of Christian teachers?

By our opponents in the argument, this question has been answered in the affirmative. They have stoutly maintained that, in reference to religious ministrations, as in other cases, the demand will be proportioned to the real wants of the community. They have defended their position upon the principles of *free trade*, and have illustrated it by a reference to the evils which, in worldly cases, result from *monopoly*. One author has compared

the churches of the established clergy to “*corn*”  
 “*mills* which possessed the exclusive title to grind  
 “the whole grindable grain in the districts where  
 “they stood,” and—the established clergyman to  
 an “established miller who not only charged higher  
 “dues, but was at no pains to keep his mill in re-  
 “pair, or to produce a good and palatable article,  
 “The evil” (says he) “has at length cured, or  
 “nearly cured itself. The system of thirlage is fast  
 “dying out. Enlightened landowners have dis-  
 “covered that such a remnant of the feudal times  
 “is totally incompatible with the prosperity of  
 “agriculture.” - - - “The kirk and the mill,” (adds  
 the author) “stand precisely on the same footing,  
 “and the corruption of ministers is to be cured by  
 “a process exactly similar to that which has been  
 “found so effectual in curing the corruption of  
 “millers.”\*

This illustration has, at least, the merit of being  
 sufficiently *familiar* ; and I have no disposition to  
 object to the *taste* which the author has displayed  
 in the selection of it. But how does it apply to  
 the point in question ? It is evidently presumed  
 that the desire or appetite of men for religious  
 edification is similar to their appetite for “the  
 “meat which perisheth,” or the desire of temporal

\* Marshall's Letter to Dr Thomson, pp. 124, 125.

and worldly gain. For the author proceeds to inquire—"what has been the consequence of abolishing thirlage? - - - Have our farmers no longer ground their grain? Have our markets no longer been supplied with meal? Have the people reverted to the primitive diet of parched corn?"—And, having answered these questions, in the only way in which they could be answered, he adds—"the same thing would infallibly happen with religion and the teachers of it, were all civil restrictions and civil preferences done away."\*—In the explanation which he thus gives, there is no room left for doubt about what the author, (whether intentionally or not) appears to maintain. The ground of argument manifestly is—that the desire of men for religious instruction, and for the benefit to be derived from religious ordinances, is not only, in ordinary cases, as strong, but does also operate as universally, as their desire after any temporal and worldly advantage. I do not believe such to have been the author's meaning; but otherwise his argument falls to the ground. For, if men have not the same appetite for what is spiritual and religious that they have for what is temporal and worldly, what conclusion does the argument warrant? Without the same desire for

\* Marshall's Letter to Dr Thomson, pp. 125, 126.

religious improvement will their demand for religious ministrations be the same? Or, if the spiritual and religious desire be not equally general, will the demand for such ministrations be general in proportion to the necessities of the case? It will not be said that the Gospel is to be offered to none but those who have hitherto received it; nor will it be pretended that men who have not received it, can be understood as having a desire after it, corresponding to their desire after their daily bread, or after temporal and worldly gain.

The distinction between the two cases has been so well marked by Dr Chalmers as induces me to think that no apology can be requisite for the length of the following quotation.—“The spontaneous demand” (says he) “of human beings for religion is far short of the interest which they actually have in it. This is not so with their demand for food or raiment, or any article which ministers to the necessities of our physical nature. The more destitute we are of these articles, the greater is our desire after them. In every case, where the want of any thing serves to whet our appetite, instead of weakening it, the supply of that thing may be left, with all safety, to the native and powerful demand for it, among the people themselves. The sensation of hunger is a sufficient guarantee for there

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\* Christian and Civic Economy, vol. i. pp. 89, 90.

exclusive right to supply the public with articles of merchandise, and has shewn that, in that case the public would be miserably served ;—and another has brought out the argument, which we have examined, about “ *thirlage and corn mills,*” for the purpose—it would seem—of proving that as certainly as farmers, when no longer astricted to a particular mill, both seek after and find other mills for the grinding of their corn, so certainly would the community at large, when no longer burdened with an established church, both seek after and find other religious ministrations accommodated to all their real wants and necessities.

The last-mentioned author, indeed, has admitted, in a subsequent publication, that, “ if men “ will not seek the Gospel of their own accord, it “ must be sent to them.”\* But, if this admission is to be understood as implying that, in fact, many will *not* seek the Gospel of their own accord, and that for that reason it must be sent to them, the admission is completely subversive of his preceding argument. For, in the case admitted, the demand for religious ministrations will not be equal to the wants of men ; and, in proportion to the inadequacy of the demand, would be the inadequacy of the supply, if there were no longer an established church to meet the necessities of the

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, p. 214.

case. It is obvious that this is the position which Dr Chalmers maintained; and, upon what ground it can be denied I am at a loss to perceive.

All our experience of dissenting churches tends to establish the position in question. It will not be denied that their places of worship are commonly erected—not where the *spiritual wants* of men are the greatest—but where the *appetite and demand* for religious ministrations are the strongest. Nor is it possible that the procedure should be different. If men out of the pale of an ecclesiastical establishment have not such a desire after religious ministrations as makes them willing to pay for the boon, the obvious result is that they must want it. And—what is still worse—men who *have* an appetite for religious ministrations—if they be unable to pay for them—must be left in the same condition.

It has been well observed that, in the Highlands of Scotland, where the spiritual wants of the people have been unquestionably great,—where, in some cases, a district of forty miles in length was not provided with more than one Christian pastor, till the civil government very lately interposed for some imperfect cure of the evil,—very little has been done by dissenting churches to provide for a more adequate administration of religious ordinances. Nor was it possible that, by them,

more could be done, because a population, neither wealthy nor numerous,—both poor and thinly scattered over a mountainous country—could not possibly pay for this important advantage.

Is it possible for any man to deny that, in the event of our church establishment being subverted, great evil of this nature would accrue? In what possible way could churches unsupported by the state either prevent or remedy such an evil? So far as I know, the only thing like an answer to this question (not previously adverted to) proceeds upon the supposition that the present stipend of every minister in the Highlands of Scotland might “be set free, and annually applied to “the purposes of religious instruction in the voluntary way.”\* I must not suppose the author of this scheme to mean that the stipend is to be levied, as now, under the authority of the civil government, and applied to the purpose suggested. For that measure would involve in it some of what he regards as the evils and atrocities of an establishment;—it would be an interposition of the powers of this world in what concerns the spiritual kingdom of Christ; and even “*compulsory*” means might become necessary for the accomplishment of the object. Yet, if I understand his argument, considered in any other view,

\* Marshall's Letter to Dr Thomson, p. 131.



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\* Christian and Civic Economy, vol. i. pp. 89, 90.

exclusive right to supply the public with articles of merchandise, and has shewn that, in that case the public would be miserably served ;—and another has brought out the argument, which we have examined, about “ *thirlage and corn mills,*” for the purpose—it would seem—of proving that as certainly as farmers, when no longer astricted to a particular mill, both seek after and find other mills for the grinding of their corn, so certainly would the community at large, when no longer burdened with an established church, both seek after and find other religious ministrations accommodated to all their real wants and necessities.

The last-mentioned author, indeed, has admitted, in a subsequent publication, that, “if men “ will not seek the Gospel of their own accord, it “ must be sent to them.”\* But, if this admission is to be understood as implying that, in fact, many will *not* seek the Gospel of their own accord, and that for that reason it must be sent to them, the admission is completely subversive of his preceding argument. For, in the case admitted, the demand for religious ministrations will not be equal to the wants of men ; and, in proportion to the inadequacy of the demand, would be the inadequacy of the supply, if there were no longer an established church to meet the necessities of the

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, p. 214.

case. It is obvious that this is the position which Dr Chalmers maintained; and, upon what ground it can be denied I am at a loss to perceive.

All our experience of dissenting churches tends to establish the position in question. It will not be denied that their places of worship are commonly erected—not where the *spiritual wants* of men are the greatest—but where the *appetite and demand* for religious ministrations are the strongest. Nor is it possible that the procedure should be different. If men out of the pale of an ecclesiastical establishment have not such a desire after religious ministrations as makes them willing to pay for the boon, the obvious result is that they must want it. And—what is still worse—men who *have* an appetite for religious ministrations—if they be unable to pay for them—must be left in the same condition.

It has been well observed that, in the Highlands of Scotland, where the spiritual wants of the people have been unquestionably great,—where, in some cases, a district of forty miles in length was not provided with more than one Christian pastor, till the civil government very lately interposed for some imperfect cure of the evil,—very little has been done by dissenting churches to provide for a more adequate administration of religious ordinances. Nor was it possible that, by them,

more could be done, because a population, neither wealthy nor numerous,—both poor and thinly scattered over a mountainous country—could not possibly pay for this important advantage.

Is it possible for any man to deny that, in the event of our church establishment being subverted, great evil of this nature would accrue? In what possible way could churches unsupported by the state either prevent or remedy such an evil? So far as I know, the only thing like an answer to this question (not previously adverted to) proceeds upon the supposition that the present stipend of every minister in the Highlands of Scotland might “be set free, and annually applied to “the purposes of religious instruction in the voluntary way.”\* I must not suppose the author of this scheme to mean that the stipend is to be levied, as now, under the authority of the civil government, and applied to the purpose suggested. For that measure would involve in it some of what he regards as the evils and atrocities of an establishment;—it would be an interposition of the powers of this world in what concerns the spiritual kingdom of Christ; and even “*compulsory*” means might become necessary for the accomplishment of the object. Yet, if I understand his argument, considered in any other view,

\* Marshall's Letter to Dr Thomson, p. 131.



it amounts to no more than this—that the present stipend of a parish minister would not be expended as it now is—that, though much of it might “go into the pockets of those from whom it comes —the government of the country or the landed proprietors,” - - “as much of it might be at the service of those who would maintain the institutions of Christ in the district, as at least to leave the inhabitants in no greater want of spiritual instruction than they are at present.”\*

In short, there would, in the first instance, be a saving to the public of what is at present bestowed on the parish minister. But whether the amount of what might be saved would henceforth be absorbed in the gross expenditure of society for its temporal purposes, or would, in part, be voluntarily devoted to the maintenance of religious ministrations, every man is individually left to conjecture, because the author himself could only form his own conjecture;—and I shall accordingly leave my reader as freely to consider whether it would be safe to abolish ecclesiastical establishments, in the confidence of the author’s conjecture being realized.

But the adversaries of a church establishment make an escape from the Highlands of Scotland

\* Marshall’s Letter to Dr Thomson, pp. 131, 132.

to those extensive regions which are comprehended in the United States of America. And, if their cause be a bad one, they may have some advantage in the argument from this change of ground; for the United States are a very wide field, with which the great body of the public in our country are comparatively unacquainted. Respecting the population of the sterile but interesting mountains of Scotland, every thing is so well known that we cannot be deceived. Respecting America, on the other hand, much may be misrepresented, even unintentionally, without our having it in our power to detect the fallacy. Yet a little discrimination of circumstances will enable us, I hope, to arrive at the truth, so far as it is essential to our present purpose.

In some of the provinces under the government of the United States, there was, at one time, a revenue exacted for defraying the expense of religious ministrations, under a law which left every man to judge what religious sect should have the benefit of his own contribution. But, this arrangement having been either altogether or very nearly discontinued, we are called to consider—Whether America affords, at the present day, an example of the ministrations of religion being duly fulfilled, without the benefit of an establishment,—or whether it does not, on the contrary, present a case in

which, from there being no established church, there is a miserable lack of religious ministrations.

Much has been said on both sides of this question;—and, to any individual who cannot bring forward new facts, nothing more seems to be left than to compare and estimate the evidence.

About thirty or forty years ago, no doubt seems to have been entertained that the ministrations of religion in some of the United States were extremely deficient. It would be difficult to imagine a more decisive statement of such deficiency than what is given by *Dr Dwight* in his "*Travels*" through part of America.

He compares the religious ministrations in Connecticut with those in the states south of New England. But, as the grounds upon which the comparison is instituted may not be very apparent to those who are but imperfectly acquainted with what had been, and at the time were, the distinguishing circumstances of the different provinces or districts in question, I shall content myself with referring to what *Dr Dwight* vouches for respecting the states south of New England, without any consideration of those *comparative* circumstances, on which he seems more particularly to rest his argument.

In the year 1798, there were, according to *Dr Dwight*, 430 congregations belonging to the Pres-

byterian church in the states south of New England. But, for these 430 congregations, there were only 242 ministers ;—and, as the author farther informs us that there were, at the same time, thirty-three ministers not settled or employed, it is obvious that the immense number of congregations, which were vacant, or not provided with ministers, did not remain unprovided on account of any want of clergymen to supply the vacancies. Though the thirty-three unsettled ministers could not have supplied one-fourth part of the vacancies in question, the fact that any number of ministers were, in such circumstances, left unemployed, is decisive evidence that there was little if any *demand* for religious ministrations,—that the unprovided congregations were either unable or unwilling to pay for them.—Upon the ground of these and other facts, as detailed by Dr Dwight, he accounted it not improbable that many of the people, “ in the States specified, had scarcely heard a sermon or a prayer in their lives.” \*

Not less afflicting is the account given by Messrs Mills and Smith, in their “ Report of a Missionary Tour throughout that part of the United States which lies west of the Alleghany Mountains,” so lately as the year 1815.—They speak of “ some American families who never

\* Dwight's Travels, Vol. iv. pp. 397, 398.

“ saw a Bible, nor heard of Jesus Christ;”\*—and, after a detail of many corresponding circumstances, they sum up what they had seen and felt in the following terms.—“ Never will the impression be  
 “ erased from our hearts, that has been made by  
 “ beholding those scenes of wide-spreading desolation. The whole country, from Lake Erie to  
 “ the Gulf of Mexico, is as the valley of the  
 “ shadow of death. Darkness rests upon it. Only  
 “ here and there a few rays of Gospel light pierce  
 “ through the awful gloom. This vast country  
 “ contains more than a million of inhabitants.  
 “ Their number is every year increased, by a  
 “ mighty flood of emigration. Soon will they be  
 “ as the sands on the sea shore for multitude. Yet  
 “ there are at present only a little more than one  
 “ hundred Presbyterian or Congregational ministers in it. Were these ministers equally distributed throughout the country, there would  
 “ be only one to every ten thousand people. But;  
 “ now, there are districts of country, containing  
 “ from twenty to fifty thousand inhabitants, entirely destitute. *And how shall they hear without a preacher ?*”\*

Of the same date, we have various statements; equally melancholy, in “ An Account of the Massachusetts Society for promoting Christian

\* P. 29.

† P. 47.

“ Knowledge.”—Let the following quotation serve as a specimen.—“ It may be stated generally, “ that, in the counties of Rockingham and Strafford, containing (exclusively of Portsmouth and Exeter) seventy-six towns, and, according to the census in 1810, eighty-three thousand and forty-seven inhabitants, there are forty-five towns, which, with their inhabitants, forty thousand two hundred and eighty-six souls, are destitute of the stated means of grace. Of these forty-five towns, some have been destitute ten, some twenty, some thirty, some forty years; and, in some, the Gospel ministry has never been stat- edly enjoyed. One lamentable consequence is, that in some towns a Christian Church has not yet been formed; and, in some where churches exist, the Lord’s Supper has not, for ten, twenty, or thirty years, been once administered. Most of these churches are also much reduced in number; one from sixty-two members to two females; several to but one male member; and, in one town, containing one thousand and sixty-three souls, the visible church of Christ, after a stated ministry of twenty-eight years, has been many years totally extinct.”\*

Of a few years’ later date (1818) we have a “ Report by the Directors of the American Society

\* P. 49.

“ for educating pious youths for the Gospel ministry.” And, if we may judge from what it contains, the condition of the United States, in respect of Christian ministers and religious ministrations, has been gradually becoming more deplorable.—A correspondent of the Directors, resident in the west, says, in one of his communications,—“ I have too often seen, in other parts of the country, professed preachers of the Gospel, who could not teach, and would not learn. Judge, then, how I must have felt, in this region, where I have seen *more than one preacher*, who was ready to avow that he *could not read the Bible*.”\* —The Directors refer to a calculation that there ought to be one educated minister to every thousand souls,—and then proceed to state—that “ In North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, containing, according to the last census, a population of 1,223,048, there are but about 110 competent ministers, leaving 1,113,048 destitute of proper religious instruction. A respectable gentleman,” (it is added) “ who is a native citizen of South Carolina, informs us that, in an ancient district of the state, embracing an extent of 900 square miles, contiguous to the sea coast, there is but one place of worship, and that not used ; and not one Christian church or minister of any

\* P. 9.

"denomination." \*—After a variety of similar statements, the Directors observe that "the following conclusions seem to be established.—1. That to furnish an adequate supply for the United States, would require more than 11,000 well qualified ministers;—2. That we actually have less than one-fourth part of this supply;—and, 3. That the ratio of supply has, for a long time, been regularly and rapidly on the decline."†

Any reader who can find leisure to consult the documents of the "American Home Missionary Society," and the "American Tract Society," will find that, even down to the year 1827, the condition of the country, in respect of religious ministrations, remained equally deplorable.

But we are now told, upon other and subsequent authority, that there have been recently great "revivals" of religion in America; and, so far as the testimony to this effect shall be found contradictory of that to which I have referred, it is fair that both their import and their credibility be compared and estimated.

In proof of the "revivals," our attention has been directed to a correspondence between the Congregational Board of English Dissenters in London, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States.—"While

\* P. 13.

† P. 21.



“ we would ever cherish” (say the Assembly)  
“ an humbling sense of our entire unworthiness;  
“ we are constrained to acknowledge, with devout  
“ gratitude, the rich blessings which the Great  
“ Head of the Church has generously bestowed  
“ upon our country, in those revivals of religion  
“ which have occurred during the last thirty years.  
“ These blessed seasons of refreshing from the pre-  
“ sence of the Lord, though not always exempt  
“ from human infirmity, and from the wiles of the  
“ adversary, have signally displayed the power of  
“ Divine grace, and their results have been most  
“ glorious. They have proved the efficient means  
“ of widely extending pure religion in our land.”  
—“ The proofs which press upon us that our re-  
“ vivals are the glorious displays of the Redeemer’s  
“ power and grace, are irresistible and overpower-  
“ ing. Surveying moral deserts rendered fruitful  
“ as the garden of the Lord, hundreds of flourish-  
“ ing churches planted and nurtured by his in-  
“ strumentality, an army of devoted pastors and  
“ missionaries, and tens of thousands of active en-  
“ gaged private Christians, gathered into the fold  
“ of Christ in these harvest seasons of mercy, we  
“ are constrained thankfully to exclaim, in refe-  
“ rence to these undeniable effects of Divine influ-  
“ ence, It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous  
“ in our eyes.” \*

\* Marshall’s Letter to Dr Thomson, pp. 152, 153.

In examining the import of this statement it is of some importance to keep in mind from whom it proceeds, and at whose instance it was obtained.

With all due respect to the members of that assembly from which the statement proceeds, it must be remembered, in reference to the bearing of their statement on the present question, that they are adversaries of an established church. This fact is made evident by another part of the same letter, in which they give it as their opinion "that the question is settled—*thoroughly settled*, by the experience of that country, that the church of Christ flourishes more without any connection with the state, than it could do if it were made a part of the civil polity."\* It must also be remembered that the statement in question appears to have been sought for and obtained "in answer to a friendly letter of inquiry," proceeding from men who concur with their transatlantic brethren in opposition to ecclesiastical establishments. And, in connection with these circumstances, it is not to be forgotten that the correspondence for this purpose originated in May 1829, after the measures now in progress against church establishments had been actively commenced.

I lay no charge against this body of men; I accuse them of nothing; I am, on the contrary, wil-

\* Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered, p. 250.

ling to believe that they are zealous and faithful towards the Master whom they profess to serve. But they may have been influenced by such peculiar circumstances, in a degree of which they were not themselves conscious. And, in weighing their testimony, I am both entitled and called upon to make allowance for these circumstances.

Without losing sight, therefore, of such considerations, let us now examine the statement of the American assembly as it is presented to us—let us strictly attend to its import, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it contains any thing contradictory of what I have quoted from other individuals and societies, or any distinct asseveration that the evils, of which *they* complained, had ceased to exist.

Considered in this view, the most important part of the statement is—that the “blessed seasons of refreshing” - - - “have proved the efficient means of widely extending pure religion in our land ;” and that the assembly survey “moral deserts rendered fruitful as the garden of the Lord, hundreds of flourishing churches planted and nourished by his instrumentality.”—But language may be, in one view, very strong, while it is also very vague in its import and application. There is nothing in the words before us to forbid our supposing that either all or much of the evil,

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so lately complained of, prevails at the present day in many of the provinces of the United States. During the time which has elapsed, since the date of Dr Dwight's publication, the country has more than doubled its inhabitants ;—and that part of the population which, thirty or forty years ago, was so thinly scattered, as to be unable to pay for religious ministrations, without the aid of an establishment, may now have become so dense, and also so wealthy, as to have it in their power to command, at their own expense, a more regular administration of ordinances. But it does by no means follow that other districts as numerous—perhaps the present *outskirts* of the inhabited country—are not now in a condition resembling that of the regions visited by Dr Dwight, at the time to which he refers ;—and, if such be the fact, all that is contained in the statement of the American assembly goes for nothing in reference to the argument which I, in this case, maintain. My argument is that an established church is indispensable for an *equal* administration of religious ordinances to the population of a whole country, and that its necessity becomes more apparent, when the inhabitants of the different districts are not equal, or nearly equal, in respect of the numbers or the wealth, which would enable them to pay for the maintenance of Christian pastors. To this argu-

ment some of the statements which I have quoted lend much force ; and the statement of the American assembly does not, in the least, detract from it. The allegations, on their part, that “ hundreds “ of flourishing churches have been planted” in those districts which were formerly unable to maintain them—that pure religion has been in this way, widely extended,—and that, with reference to such districts, “ moral deserts have been “ rendered fruitful as the garden of the Lord”—are all consistent with a very natural supposition that, over a great part of the inhabited country, —more especially in what are now its extensive outskirts—neither the numbers nor the wealth of the people admit of their having the benefit of religious ministrations without the aid of an established church.

If the Presbyterian Assembly of America, with the knowledge they must have had of what had been written and published among themselves by such men as Dr Dwight, Mr Mills and others, and with impressions unfriendly to ecclesiastical establishments,—had found it in their power to say that the evils, which had been so justly complained of, did no longer exist in any considerable part of the United States,—it seems impossible that such a declaration would have been withheld, or

would not have been prominently brought forward in all its accompanying circumstances.

But the silence of the American assembly upon this point is not our only ground for concluding that there is, even at the present day, much want of religious ministrations, over a great part of their country. The *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* has furnished us with *extracts of letters*, of so late a date as 1829 and 1830, from an individual resident in America, to whose sound judgment, good principles, and favourable opportunities of observation, the editor of the *Instructor* bears a strong testimony.

Yet, in entering upon a consideration of this letter-writer's evidence, I desire to premise that I am far from regarding it as unexceptionable. It is liable to very nearly the same objections which I have stated against the opposite testimony given by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian churches. It appears to have been asked for and obtained by a friend of church establishments, from one whom he regarded as friendly to them, and perhaps obtained for the purpose of being employed in behalf of establishments.—It may also be objected that the letter-writer is anonymous; but the late much respected editor of the *Christian Instructor* gave us his own pledge as a substitute for the name of the author,—a sub-

stitution which few readers will decline to accept.

Let us, therefore, attend to the testimony of the letter-writer, under those reservations—but no more—which the circumstances of the case dictate.

“An establishment” (says he) “ensures to the public some accommodation for Divine worship. Here (Centreville) there being no such security, there is no accommodation. There are here many Episcopalians in name, but there is no minister; and had it not been that a church was erected in the neighbourhood by the English government, prior to the revolution, there would have been no place of worship at all. A people so *unwilling* to pay a clergyman, however able they may be to do so, cannot be expected to come forward with alacrity or good will to build a church.”\*—In a subsequent letter (from New York) the same writer adds—“I have known families in the south professing no *creed* at all —whose children had never been baptized—and who regarded that sacrament as a matter of very secondary moment. But it must be remembered that there was no clergyman regularly officiating there—nor is there a town within twenty miles distance at which such a person could be

\* Christian Instructor, Vol. xxix. p. 329.

“found. In large towns the case is different ;  
“but in the country the means of religious in-  
“struction are much more limited.”\*

It will be observed that these statements seem partly to refer to a district which had been early peopled, and in which provision had been made for religious ministrations, while the country was under the rule of the British government,—a circumstance which only strengthens our supposition that there may be a similar, if not a greater, want of religious ministrations in the districts which have been but very lately and very imperfectly peopled.

In concluding what I have thought it necessary to say respecting a want of religious ministrations in America, I would only farther advert to the latest publication in that country (so far as I know) which bears immediately on the point in question, —“A Series of Letters by Mr Timothy Flint, “President of the Seminary of Rapide,” published so lately as the year 1831.—Of this book I have not been able to obtain a copy ; but no reader, it is believed, will doubt the authenticity of the following quotations from it in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1832.

The author refers to the state of religion and its ministrations, in the Valley of the Mississippi,

\* Christian Instructor, Vol. xxix. p. 666.



and observes that, in the districts of his occasional residence, "the people think in general, that *attendance* upon preaching sufficiently compensates "the minister."—"No minister" (says he) "of any Protestant denomination, to my knowledge, has ever received a sufficient living two years in succession." - - - "For two years" (adds he) "I derived not support enough from the people, (though I laboured *in season and out of season*,) "to defray the expense of my ferriage over the "rivers."\*

We have seen that, in those districts of a country which are poor and thinly inhabited, the people may be quite *unable*, without the aid of an establishment, to obtain the benefit of religious ministrations. But it will be observed that both Mr Flint, and the letter-writer in the Christian Instructor, refer to an *unwillingness* also to pay a clergyman. This is the ground upon which I set out with maintaining that, in the absence of an establishment, the *demand* for religious instruction is not adequate to the *wants* of men;—and it is obvious that, when inability and unwillingness are combined, the evil must be proportionally aggravated.

If we may judge from Mr Flint's account, the way in which religion manifests itself, even where

\* Quarterly Review for October 1832, pp. 203, 204.

its ministrations seem to be more attended to, is not calculated to increase our confidence in the real value of any "revivals" which have taken place in the districts to which he alludes.—"There is much appearance and seeming" (says he)—"frequent meetings, spasms, cries, fallings, faintings,—and, what I imagine will be a new aspect of religious feeling to most of my readers, the religious laugh. Nothing is more common at these scenes, than to see the more forward people indulging in what seemed to me an idiot and spasmodic laugh, and when I asked what it meant, I was told it was the holy laugh! Preposterous as the term may seem to my readers, the phrase, *holy laugh*, is so familiar to me as no longer to excite surprise. But, in these same regions, and among these same people, morals, genuine tenderness of heart, and capacity to be guided either by reason, persuasion, or the uniform dictates of the Gospel, was an affecting desideratum."\*

I have no wish to enter, more particularly, into the question about "revivals." It is quite sufficient for my purpose to have produced the requisite evidence respecting a lack of religious ministrations in America. We have seen that, in reference to this point, the Presbyterian Assembly

\* Quarterly Review for October 1832, p. 206.

of that country does not contradict the evidence of such men as Dr Dwight, and Mr Mills, nor directly assert that there has been, in this respect, a change of circumstances. On the contrary, we have found recent evidence that what Dr Dwight and Mr Mills in this respect deplored continues to be miserably realized ;—and, in such circumstances, our conclusion must be—that the case of America (notwithstanding the “revivals”) only strengthens the evidence, otherwise afforded, that, without an established church, there is no security for an adequate administration of religious ordinances.

To some of my readers, the documents to which I have referred, for establishing this conclusion, will not have the advantage of novelty ; for they have been previously referred to by others ; and some of them have been quoted much more at large. But, in a publication intended to embrace the whole argument respecting ecclesiastical establishments, I have felt it indispensable to present such a comprehensive, though abbreviated, view of the evidence, respecting the state of religious ministrations in America, as might tend to satisfy every unprejudiced mind.

Let us now attend to the utility of ecclesiastical establishments considered in another view.

Supposing that what are called *voluntary churches* were to be so encouraged and supported by the population of any country, as to be quite sufficient for the administration of ordinances to all the inhabitants,—an important question would still remain—whether the ministrations of an established church, or those of such churches as exist in America, and among dissenters of our own country, be most likely to prove instrumental in the hand of God for advancing the interests of true religion.

For the solution of this question, it is essential to keep in mind that the great difference between established churches on the one hand, and dissenting or voluntary churches on the other, is that the clergy of the established church are maintained at the public expense, while the clergy of other churches are supported by the voluntary contributions of those to whom they minister,—that the former do not look to their congregations for any part of their daily bread, while the latter are more or less dependent on the people under their spiritual charge for the comforts and even the necessities of life.

I have no wish to disguise the unquestionable fact—that there are evils resulting from both conditions. But, in the present imperfect state of human things, it is essential to distinguish a less

from a greater evil, and to compare the amount of each with its accompanying and corresponding benefits.

This is a delicate part of the task which I have assigned to myself; but I will not shrink from it. I should be the more sorry to shrink from it, because, so far as I know, it has not been allowed its due weight in the argument.

Without any blazoning pretensions to liberality, I desire to admit that the dissenting clergy among us are eminently useful. Individuals of their number have done honour to their profession; and, as a body, they have contributed to the public weal. While I am confident that the rivalry produced by an established church has the effect of stimulating their exertions, I have no doubt that their exertions have more or less a corresponding effect on the clergy of the establishment. This has been often admitted. Perhaps the admission, as now renewed, may be received with scorn by some of my dissenting brethren; but I trust it will not be so generally; for very different is my feeling in reference to the advantage derived from them.

Let us, therefore, in the spirit of candour, endeavour to estimate the comparative advantages and disadvantages, which result from the mini-

sters of religion being either dependent or independent on those to whom they minister.

We must not pretend to determine this case by any appeal to facts and experience; for such an appeal would have any thing rather than a healing effect; it would lead to interminable dispute. It will be safest to leave all men to form their own estimate of what they *have* observed or experienced, without the interposition of any argument. But, in looking forward to what may be most for the public good in the time to come, there is no reason why we should shut our eyes against the natural tendency of each of the two rival systems to produce either good or evil.

The great objection against the ministers of religion being made independent of the men for whose good they labour, is—that it may tend to make them *indolent or indifferent* in the discharge of their professional duty,—that, because their worldly gain does not depend on the way in which they perform that duty, or on the place which they hold in the affections of their people, they may be more or less regardless of its performance.

It will be perceived, at once, that this objection proceeds on a supposition that the individuals, to whom the objection more particularly applies, are not duly actuated by those higher motives which ought to influence the whole of their labour. But

I do not, on this account, make light of the objection; for there have been from the beginning, and will continue to be, men who, outwardly professing to devote themselves to the service of Christ, are most unhappily influenced by worldly motives, in much that concerns his honour and interest in the world :—I only desire that the same concession be not withheld on the opposite side of the argument.

Those ministers of religion, who are dependent on the people to whom they minister, for the comforts and even the necessities of life, are certainly in no danger of being thereby seduced to indolence or indifference in the discharge of their duty. But are they not placed in still greater hazard of a very different kind—that of being tempted to accommodate their religious ministrations to the *wishes* rather than to the *wants* of men?

I charge no minister of either a dissenting or an established Church with any such foul iniquity. If dissenting ministers be, in this respect, more than others exposed to temptation, the greater credit is due to them when they rise superior to it. But it is neither the less fair nor the less necessary to consider the circumstances in which some *may* be seduced,—with a view to what may be reasonably expected, under the present imperfect condition of human nature.

It will not be denied that there is a disposition in the corrupt hearts of many to such false views of religion, as may encourage them to hope for acceptance with God, without renouncing their favourite iniquity. It will not be denied that such a perverted use may be made of the doctrine of salvation through Christ. Nor is it less certain that, from the beginning, there have been some willing to make a high profession of religion, and to conform very scrupulously to its exactions in respect of outward worship, without being equally disposed to conform to the great law of eternal and immutable obligation,—in reference to their ordinary life and conduct. It is manifest that a minister of the Gospel by accommodating his doctrine, more or less, to such fatal prejudices,—or even by refraining from a bold and decisive testimony against them,—may gratify many who are under his spiritual charge, and thereby promote his worldly interest, so far as it is dependent on them.

The fair question, therefore, is whether the hazard of what I have last represented, in the case of ministers who are dependent on their respective congregations, or the opposite hazard of intolerance or indifference, on the part of established clergy, be the evil which we have most cause to dread?



Admitting, to the utmost extent, the personal *criminality* of indolence or indifference in ministerial duty, it will not be pretended that a perversion of the doctrine of the Gospel, for the advancement of a worldly purpose, is in its nature *less criminal*. I shall not, therefore, take an undue advantage in the argument, if I rest it upon the single question—which of the two evils is likely to be realized, in the degree most injurious to the interest of true religion?

Supposing some established clergymen to have been indolent or indifferent in their ministerial functions, and supposing that higher motives shall not prompt them to greater exertion,—still a regard to their reputation in the world is calculated to set bounds to the evil. Even a spirit of salutary rivalry, with reference to one another, if not also with reference to the dissenting clergy around them, may be supposed to operate in a very considerable degree as a counteracting principle, by stimulating them to the discharge of duty. But is there any corresponding check to the evil which we have supposed to result from *more or less perversion* of the doctrine of the Gospel? If clergymen, who depend for their maintenance on the good will of those to whom they minister, shall, with a view to their worldly interest, accommodate their interpretation of

Scripture-doctrine to the wishes and prejudices of a corrupt heart, they may not only secure to themselves the pecuniary gain which has been their primary object, but, in so doing, advance their reputation among the people committed to their spiritual charge ;—and, in this way every worldly motive may combine for tempting them to persevere in what leads to the ruin of immortal souls.

If the independent condition of an established clergyman tempt him to carelessness or indifference in the discharge of his duty,—they to whom he ministers must be aware of the evil which results to them ; they have, at the same time, a remedy in their power, and are likely to resort to it ; they can avail themselves of the more faithful labour of some dissenting minister. But, if a clergyman be, from his dependent condition, tempted to gratify the people among whom he labours, by accommodating the doctrine, which he preaches, to the prejudices of their corrupt hearts,—if, from his dependent condition, he be tempted to do so with a view to his own worldly interest,—if, by either perverting or disguising the truth as it is in Jesus, he render himself a favourite of those to whom he ministers,—at once accomplishing his object of pecuniary gain, and establishing himself in the confidence of his people,—

what hope can there be, humanly speaking, of a people in such circumstances escaping from the fatal snare ?

If any man shall remonstrate, with a feeling of indignity, against the supposition that any considerable number of the ministers of religion,—whether established or dissenting—can be so much under the influence of this world,—my answer is—that I respect the honourable feeling from which his remonstrance proceeds, but that it is safer to make too much, rather than too little, allowance for the worldly propensities, and corrupt tendencies, of human nature.

It may be said, indeed, that, even under an ecclesiastical establishment, there are many congregations exposed to such a hazard as I have represented,—in consequence of ministers of chapels of ease being, like dissenting clergymen, dependent in a great measure on the people to whom they minister. But this evil does not arise from any imperfection in the *principle* of an establishment. It arises from the principle not being applied, and carried into effect, with reference to an increasing population. Chapels of ease are resorted to, only when parish churches cannot be obtained ; they are resorted to, with a distinct understanding and acknowledgment of the disadvantage in question ; because that disadvantage is less than the evil of

leaving any considerable part of the population necessarily shut out from the communion of the national church. It is believed that many ministers of chapels feel and lament the inconvenience to which they are subjected, in the exercise of their functions, by this distinguishing circumstance in their condition ;—and much is it to be desired that an enlightened government may relieve them from it, by such an enlargement and extension of the provision which is made for religious ministrations, as may place all the clergy of our established churches upon a footing equally independent.

The argument, therefore, under which it is proposed to leave religion and its interests in the exclusive charge of what are now dissenting,—and, without an establishment, might still be—voluntary churches,—must either stand or fall on its own appropriate ground ;—and I do not think it necessary to say more for the purpose of proving that, in order to the requisite independence in the discharge of duty, we must have ministers of religion who, in respect of outward condition, are themselves independent.

It has now, I trust, been made sufficiently manifest that, after the dispensation of miracles had ceased, ecclesiastical establishments were the great instrument in the hand of God for a more exten-

sive propagation of the Gospel,—that the national authorities by which they had been supported, were also eminently instrumental towards the accomplishment of that reformation, under which Protestant churches have been since maintained,—that neither dissenting churches, nor those which have voluntarily presented themselves in the absence of an establishment, have given evidence of their adequacy to afford such a supply of religious ministrations as is proportioned to the wants of men,—that, if the ministers of religion be not made independent of those to whom they minister, their condition is unfavourable to an honest and faithful discharge of their duty,—and that, in these circumstances, the *utility* of ecclesiastical establishments cannot, with reason, be called in question.

But there is a peculiar department of their *utility* to which I have not hitherto referred, and which it may be necessary to distinguish in this argument.

The blessed efficacy of religious ministrations to promote religion in the heart and life calls us to regard them as essential not only to our future and everlasting well-being, but also to our temporal and worldly interest,—and particularly to the interests of civil society. Our future and everlast-

ing welfare being their primary object, and unspeakably the most important, my preceding argument has been conducted with a paramount view to this object. But, if it be equally certain that religious ministrations have a real tendency to promote our worldly interest, more especially as members of society,—if they have a tendency to sanctify and strengthen the bonds of civil society,—and if, upon the grounds which we have examined, it appear, at the same time, that an established church is essential to our enjoying the full benefit of such ministrations, it would be unpardonable to omit this consideration in estimating the *utility* of ecclesiastical establishments.

One author, indeed, has endeavoured to preclude us, by a very bold assertion, from making any reference to this part of the case. “The ministry of the Gospel” (says he) “was *not instituted with any view to civil utility*; it is a means of a purely spiritual character, having reference to objects as vastly transcending in importance, every thing with which the speculations of politicians are conversant, as eternity is longer than time. It has one simple end, to which as a means it is perfectly and exclusively adapted; that end is the salvation of the soul.” \*

Is it possible either that the author had forgot-

\* *Conder on Protestant Nonconformity*, p. 590.

ten the express declaration of the Apostle Paul that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise *of the life that now is*, and of "that which is to come,"\* or that he could mean to deny that "the ministry of the Gospel was instituted" for promoting that godliness which in its turn, realizes to us "the promise of the life that now is?" I should be sorry to load my argument with a reference to that variety of passages in the New as well as the Old Testament, in which the promise of worldly blessings is annexed to religion in the heart and life. But the declaration of Paul, to which I have referred, is immediately followed up and enforced by him in a way calculated to have the effect, if anything can, of rendering our impression of it indelible. "This" (adds he)—what I have now said about godliness and its promise—"is a faithful saying, and worthy of "all acceptation."

In what possible way can it be maintained, consistently with a declaration so solemnly enforced, that the ministry of the Gospel was not instituted "with *any* view to *civil utility*?" Though we cannot, for an instant, suppose that the author meant to deny that "the ministry of the Gospel "was instituted" for promoting godliness,—it seems equally unaccountable that, admitting this import-

\* 1. Tim. Ch. iv. v. 8.

ant truth, he should deny the conclusion which we derive from it. If a Gospel-ministry promote godliness, and godliness promote our interest in "the life that now is"—does a Gospel-ministry not promote that interest? The Apostle's declaration does not even leave us to contemplate our prosperity in "the life that now is," merely as one of the *effects* of godliness, and consequently of that Gospel-ministry by which godliness is promoted,—his words amount to a declaration that such has been *the purpose and design of Heaven*. He represents the Divine Being as making a *promise* to godliness—a promise of the blessing in question to men who maintain godliness; and surely it will not be pretended that what God has promised it has not been his purpose and design to fulfil, in the very way and by the very means which correspond to the tenor of the promise; nor can we doubt of its having been his purpose that men should take encouragement from his promise—from his promise even of a worldly blessing—to maintain that godliness, and that respect for religious ministrations as the means of promoting it, on which the fulfilment of the promise depends. As certainly as the interests of civil society constitute a part of what concerns us in "the life that now is," we must hold it to be the purpose of God that a regard to these interests should operate—



not indeed as our primary and paramount motive—but not the less truly as a secondary motive to whatever can promote the cause of godliness,—consequently to the maintenance of religious ministrations as essential to godliness, and to the maintenance of ecclesiastical establishments, so far as they are essential to the support of religious ministrations.

Now, we have already seen that an established church is of high importance for an adequate support of those ministrations, by which the cause of godliness or true religion is most effectually maintained ;—and how, then, shall we question their utility for promoting the interest of civil society ? Has religion no tendency to make us good and useful members of society ? Its salutary influence in this department will scarcely be denied ; it is so obvious as of itself to account abundantly for civil governments having, from the beginning, interposed in behalf of religion. Religious *principle* is, at once, the cheapest and the most effectual instrument that can be employed for accomplishing the ends and purposes of government. It goes far to restrain men from the commission of those crimes, for which the magistrate must otherwise visit the defaulter with punishment. By its influence in reforming the corrupt heart, “ out of which are

“ the issues of life,” this purpose is more effectually served than it can ever be by human laws. The laws of men take cognizance only of the outward conduct, and only of those parts of the conduct in respect of which crime may be ascertained by evidence. But religion, by its dominion over the heart, strikes at the root of the evil, and, by means of the controlling power of conscience, prevents the commission of many crimes, to which no human laws could ever reach.—Besides, punishment is almost the only sanction by which human laws are enforced ; but, when religion would deter us from what is criminal, and engage us to what is praiseworthy, in our capacity as members of society, it does not resort to threatening alone,—it also holds out to us a great reward ; it imparts to us a promise (as we have already seen) both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

It is impossible that enlightened governments can be insensible of the aid which, in these views, they derive from ecclesiastical establishments, so far as such establishments tend to promote true religion. But an established church goes farther,—it tends to consecrate the state itself, and the rulers of the state. When men in authority are united to those over whom they rule, by a profession of the same faith, and by the same exercises of religious worship, it has a tendency to

unite their hearts in one bond of mutual confidence and mutual love. Even the most exalted of those, who are invested with authority, learn to regard the meanest of their subjects as their brethren in Christ, and their equals in the sight of God ; and, to the great body of the people over whom they rule, the most satisfying pledge is afforded for their ruling in the fear of the Lord.

By means of a church establishment, the state discharges, at the same time, the duty of a parent to those over whom it presides. It dutifully and kindly offers to all, and more particularly to the young, that wholesome instruction of which individual parents may be, in some cases, neglectful. Without extorting or demanding the consent of any, it courteously presents to the consideration of all, those important truths, on the application of which to their own hearts both their present and their future well-being depend ;—and men are thereby taught to look to their rulers with filial reverence—to give them obedience not so much “ for wrath as for conscience sake.”

Is it too much to say that, in this way, a people or nation may *approve itself* in the sight of Heaven? The Divine Being was pleased, from the beginning, to reward or punish men, not as individuals only, but also in their public or national capacity ; and it is vain to argue (however confi-

dently it may be asserted) that this is not the way of God under the Christian dispensation. Is there not, at this hour, a people or nation—that people whom the Lord, at one time, chose for his own—suffering, in their public and national capacity, what was denounced as the punishment of unexampled national iniquity? Is it not made manifest, by their being still preserved and known as a separate people, that it is, strictly speaking, a *national* punishment to which they are subjected? Do we not also know, upon the authority of the Scriptures of truth, that, as a people and nation, they will yet be restored to the favour of Heaven, and be again honoured of God as a *nation*, in a degree proportioned to the penitence, as well as the faith and love and zeal for his honour, with which they will turn from their sins unto him?

In the present imperfect state we can little afford to relinquish or lose the advantage of any motive which can draw us more near to God. In the hearts of men who love their country, gratitude to the Divine Being for national blessings is not without this effect. In the weekly service of the sanctuary, we render our thanksgiving to him for such blessings, and also implore their continuance. So far as our hearts are thereby drawn out more effectually towards God, our patriotic

regards contribute to nourish and strengthen our religious principle ;—and, so far as an established church serves to unite the hearts of a people with those of their rulers, in that bond of love and confidence which their common faith so naturally tends to consecrate,—it has more or less the effect of entailing on their country the continued blessing of Heaven.

Let me not however be misunderstood, in concluding this part of the argument.—I have never maintained, and am now as far as ever from maintaining, that an advancement of the interests of civil society is the great and primary purpose of the ministry of the Gospel. The Gospel addresses itself to every man individually, for the salvation of his own immortal soul ; and there is no language too strong for representing the transcendent importance of this object, compared to any temporal and worldly advantage. I have therefore considered, previously and more at large, the importance of a church-establishment for the separate advantage—for the spiritual and everlasting welfare—of all and every individual to whom its ministrations are addressed. This is the anchor, and stronghold of my argument for the *utility* of such establishments. I trust that, in this view, their utility has been made manifest. But

I trust, at the same time, that their tendency to promote the worldly interests of men as members of civil society, and in their corporate or national capacity, may be regarded as a salutary and blessed accommodation to the worldly circumstances in which we are placed.—And I cannot allow myself to doubt that, to every unprejudiced mind, the whole argument for their *utility* will come home with more effect in connection with the previous argument, from which it has appeared that such establishments are authorized by the revealed counsel and will of God.

## SECTION II.

ON THE OBJECTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN URGED AGAINST  
THE UTILITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

OUR argument for the utility of ecclesiastical establishments has been so conducted as to meet, in the various steps of its progress, a variety of intermediate objections. But the reader will not be surprised to find that, in this department, there are still some objections which, if well founded, would more or less stand in the way of our general conclusion.

Some of the objections to which I replied, as applicable to the *Divine authority* for such establishments, had been so generally urged, and were at the same time so specious in their aspect, as to call for both a strict and deliberate investigation. Those to which I am now about to refer will not be found to have, in all respects, the same claim to attention; but, as they have been recently urged with sufficient confidence, and may have

made an impression on some minds, I shall advert to them in what seems to be their natural order.

I. It has been maintained that the ministers of religion under our church establishments are not qualified for their functions in respect of *education*.

Perhaps this objection would not have been very generally anticipated ; but the language in which it has been lately urged is at least sufficiently explicit. “ Many of the clergy of the establishments ” (says a recent author) “ receive “ no theological education at all that deserves the “ name,”—and, again, “ Not a few of their ministers”—(the ministers of establishments) “ are “ little acquainted with the Scriptures, and, even “ when meaning to be very evangelical, often err “ through sheer ignorance.” - - - “ Many tradesmen and labourers are better educated in the “ Scriptures, and better acquainted with their contents.”\*

Such assertions as these might have been overlooked, if they had not proceeded from one who seems to be upheld—perhaps not without reason—as the ablest and most accomplished of those who have lately presented themselves to public notice in Scotland, as adversaries of an ecclesiasti-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, pp. 34 and 185.



cal establishment.—For this author's partiality, indeed, to the education of his own church it is but fair to make much allowance,—even when he ventures to tell us that “the most complete system  
“ of ministerial education, perhaps in Europe, is  
“ that of the United Associate church in Scot-  
“ land.”\* But when the education of the clergy of establishments is attacked in such unmeasured terms, by one, who appears, himself, to have received a fair education, silence would be criminal.

The author, indeed, does not trace the alleged evil to any thing inherent in the principles of an establishment; but he must, at least, be understood as imputing it to a gross imperfection in the ecclesiastical laws by which establishments are governed.

Now, so far as concerns the Church of England, which seems to be, at least indirectly, included in the attack, I can speak but imperfectly, and shall limit myself to what I know. I incidentally know that, in the University of Oxford (and I presume in that of Cambridge also) theological education is not confined to those who are intended for the church; a competent knowledge of the doctrine and the evidences of the Christian faith is indispensable to all who apply for academical degrees;—and much is it to be regretted that the laity of

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, p. 183.

Scotland in the higher ranks of society have not the same advantage. It is a high distinction of a well-educated Englishman that nobody can suppose him ignorant of the great principles of religion ; and, in such circumstances, it is not very natural to suppose that the education of the *clergy* of England is not duly provided for. But I will not allow myself to speak of what can be so much better explained by others. It is against the clergy of *Scotland* that the charge of theological ignorance, arising from a want of the requisite education has been more directly laid ; and, though I am not fond of the language of flat contradiction, I am proud to say, *from personal knowledge*, that never was charge more unfounded. There is no other liberal profession, for which an education is demanded—so comprehensive and laborious in its progress—requiring, in consequence, such a length of time for its accomplishment,—and ultimately bearing so exclusively on its peculiar and professional object,—as that which the Church of Scotland not only demands by the letter of its law, but in its practice rigidly exacts, from all candidates for the holy ministry. It is not till after a course of study in one of our universities, for at least *three* but more commonly *four* years, devoted to the general and varied objects of literature and science, that any youth can be enrolled

as a student of Divinity. His theological studies are then continued for four years, during three of which his constant attendance is required on the prelections of one or more professors of the theological faculty,—or, if the time of his *regular* attendance be shortened, the whole period of his study is proportionally lengthened;—and from time to time, during his theological course, he is called to give evidence of his proficiency, by being subjected to public examinations, and is also required to write appropriate discourses on such subjects as are prescribed to him.

These are facts of which the author in question could scarcely be supposed altogether ignorant. Yet, in the face of them, he proceeds to say—“Great numbers of the ministers of the Scotch Establishment do not receive the education of clergymen at all, but the education of *mere schoolmasters*. Their primary object, while prosecuting their studies, is, not to become acquainted with theology, but to become qualified for the situation of preceptor in some gentleman’s family.”\*

It is quite true that many of the young men, who are educated for the Church of Scotland, become the teachers of others, as tutors or precep-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, Note B. p. 326.

tors in families, before they be ordained to the cure of souls. But the more common opinion has been that this is an important advantage to them. While they have had the previous benefit of such an education as that to which I have referred, their labour in the education of others has the effect of rendering much of what they had themselves acquired, more effectual for all its salutary purpose. Can it be doubted that, by their labour in teaching others, they gain a more secure and effectual possession of what they had previously learnt? Or can it be doubted that the classical literature and human science, with which they become, in this way, more perfectly acquainted, have the effect of qualifying them, in many respects, for a continued and more perfect cultivation of that theological lore which may adorn their professional character? Some clergymen have deeply lamented that they had not enjoyed this advantage; and I trust that, among those who have possessed it, there are none who will think themselves degraded by their condition and functions in early life being compared to those of a *school-master*.

II. After an objection to the education of established clergy, we may naturally consider an objection to the doctrine which they preach.

We are told that “ an evangelical clergyman, “ in the proper meaning of the word, is a clergy- “ man, who not only believes the Gospel, but who “ brings habitually and prominently into notice “ the doctrines which distinguish it as a revela- “ tion from Heaven, from all other systems,” and that “ hardly any thing can be more exceedingly “ pernicious than for the public teachers of reli- “ gion to conceal these doctrines, or refuse to them “ the most prominent place in their ministrations,” —that “ it is insidiously to betray the cause which “ it is their office to promote, and forfeit every “ title to public or private confidence,”—yet that “ we must wilfully shut our eyes against the clear- “ est evidence, or see that church establishments “ have everywhere a tendency to call forth such “ teachers.”\*

In the general statement, thus presented, of what does or does not become a minister of Christ I cordially acquiesce. But I certainly object to the words, in which the conduct so justly condemned is imputed to any “ tendency” of a church establishment. I am far from admitting such a charge against any Protestant establishment with which I am more or less acquainted ; but I shall probably give a more satisfying answer by con-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, pp. 169, 170, 171.

fining it to the case which I best know—the ecclesiastical establishment to which I belong.

If any minister of our national church do not conscientiously and unequivocally adhere to the doctrine which is contained in our standards, as the genuine and unadulterated doctrine of the Gospel, he is bound, both as a servant of Christ, and as an honest man, to resign his ministerial charge. Or, if any minister, adhering to our standards, do not, in his public discourses, present what is truly *evangelical*—or, in other words, what is peculiar to the doctrine of the Gospel—in that prevailing and paramount view, to which it is entitled, as the only way of salvation to guilty and sinful creatures,—that man is unfaithful to the master whom he professes to serve, and unfaithful also to those to whom he ministers. But how does this admission—No, I will not call it *admission*, for it is not what I admit or concede, but what I maintain—How does this *position* aid the argument of our opponents against church establishments? What evidence have they brought forward to show that establishments have the alleged “*tendency* to call forth such teachers?” So far as a church establishment makes the clergy outwardly independent, it should, on the contrary, tend to make them faithful in the discharge of

their duty, by raising them superior to every worldly motive by which they might be tempted to accommodate their instructions to the prejudices of men. If there be a particle of truth or honesty within them, they may certainly be expected to prove faithful,—even in circumstances by which the fidelity of others might be severely tried. I know of no evidence, on the opposite side, but an assertion, sometimes equivocally made—sometimes more directly hazarded—that there actually are many unevangelical teachers among the clergy of our church establishments, and particularly among those of the Church of Scotland.

Now, in objecting to such a charge against the clergy of Scotland in particular, it must not be supposed that I mean to make myself answerable for the doctrine of all the individuals who appear in the pulpits of our establishment. There were some false and unfaithful teachers in the Church of Christ from the beginning; in every period of the Church, there have been such teachers; and dissenting churches have had their own share of them.

What I maintain is—that the crime of either contradicting,—or culpably neglecting, by leaving out of prominent view—the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, is not imputable to any such number of the established clergy of Scotland, as to give

honest ground for supposing that ecclesiastical establishments have a tendency to discourage religious ministrations. This proposition is the point that I am called to maintain in the present argument; and no man has a right to deny it without shewing ground for his denial. I am bound to prove what ought to be presumed in the absence of proof to the contrary.

It must not even be understood as making an admission—for it would be an admission which no knowledge does not warrant—that a considerable number of my professional brethren are liable to the charge in question. On the contrary, my observation, during what has been rather a long life, entitles me to say that in the course of the last forty years, there has been a gradual approximation, on the part of those who are called the two sides of our great division, to a closer resemblance of one another in the features of their public teaching; and it must not be forgotten that any opposite tendency which seems to be borne by our dissenting side refers to a case respecting which no parallel can be drawn. It must be comparatively recent, and it must be about a want of uniformity in the views of our nation—views which have attained a degree of permanency and proportion.



ed to the degree in which there has ceased to be cause for it.

Reference has been made to the epistles of the New Testament as a *contrast* to the mode of preaching which has been pronounced unevangelical; and highly blameable, indeed, must be the public instructions which do not essentially correspond to that invaluable standard. *It* presents to us such a combination of doctrinal and practical instruction as cannot be too much admired and imitated. But it is not, on that account, to be forgotten that much of what the epistles contain is adapted to the peculiar circumstances of those to whom they were immediately addressed. If there be, in some of them, a preponderating measure of doctrinal statement, it is not to be forgotten that this was peculiarly necessary—obviously indispensable—at a time when the religion of Christ was *new* to the world,—when its great principles were to be, for the first time, satisfactorily expounded to many,—and expounded in books which were to be a standard of faith to all future generations. It does not follow that ministerial instructions may not now be, in some measure, accommodated to circumstances so very different as those in which we are placed. Far less can that variety of topics which are introduced in the same epistle,—for the obvious purpose of teach-

ing, at once, much that was new, or in a great measure unknown to the persons addressed,—be a reason why a minister of Christ may not now limit himself, in a single discourse, either to the exposition of one particular doctrine, accompanied with a view of its practical bearing, or to an illustration of one particular duty, accompanied with an enforcement of it by the great motives of the Gospel. I refer more particularly to this point, because, whatever may be the case now, the time is not long past, when, by some men, no sermon or discourse was reckoned duly evangelical, which did not contain an abbreviated view of the whole doctrine of the New Testament,—a standard for ministrations which may have been very convenient to the preacher, since all his sermons must have been, in respect of their substance, very nearly the same.

One question, however, remains ; and it seems an important one. Our opponents in this argument may be fairly expected to say what security is to be given to the Christian world against erroneous or unevangelical teaching, in the event of ecclesiastical establishments being abolished. That solemn and written adherence to the doctrine contained in its standards, which an established Church requires, has in a great measure, it is believed, the desired effect. What, then, is propos-

ed for affording additional and more perfect security? So far from pointing out any way in which this end is to be accomplished, the author to whom we have adverted, as complaining of unevangelical doctrine, has distinctly expressed an opinion which, if admitted and acted upon, would effectually supersede all the security, which the Christian world has hitherto enjoyed, for what is evangelical in either the faith or the ministrations of their spiritual instructors. "To declare an assent" (says he) "to a system of doctrines is never understood, in the ordinary meaning of words, to imply a belief of *every particular* tenet, which the system contains;" - - it is only "an assent to its spirit and leading principles."\* This remark is made, and the opinion expressed, with a direct reference to that subscription of creeds or confessions, on which we, at present, depend for the evangelical doctrine of Christian ministers; and it cannot be difficult to perceive that, if the author's opinion be acknowledged and recognised, such subscriptions are good for nothing. If it is to be understood, for the time to come, that a man, with a view to his ordination as a minister of Christ, may honestly declare, under his hand-writing, his assent and adherence to a particular creed or con-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, p. 241.

fession, while, in his own mind, he disbelieves and rejects any one doctrine or tenet, which is unquestionably and unequivocally contained in it,—what security can we have for his belief in others—even in the most important articles of our Christian faith? If he may honestly append his subscription to the whole, while he denies *one* of the articles, shall we blame him and pronounce him dishonest for doing so, because he happens to deny *two* or it may be more? Or, if he is himself to be the judge (as he must be) of the *comparative importance* of the doctrines or tenets which he denies, what security can we have against his regarding, as trivial and unimportant, what others would account essential to the only true way of salvation? It would tend more to the advancement of truth and honesty in the world, that creeds and confessions should be at once and entirely abolished, than that they should be maintained under such an explanation of their meaning as that to which our attention has now been directed. But, so long as we have the advantage of a declared adherence to them in a way which is felt to be binding on the consciences of men, I cannot make light of the pledge which they afford, for the evangelical character of the doctrine which is preached in the pulpits of our established church.

III. It was naturally to be expected that the objections, which we have considered, against the education and doctrine of the established clergy, would be followed up by a complaint of their being deficient in professional diligence. But to this part of the case I have already had occasion to advert. If the clergy of an established Church be, more than others, wanting in diligence, it can result only from their being outwardly independent of the people to whom they minister. Our attention was therefore called to this point, when illustrating the direct advantage which a Church-establishment derives from the independence of its clergy. It was then, I trust, made evident that any tendency, which the independence of the clergy may have to encourage indolence in the discharge of their duty, is far more than counterbalanced by *irremediable* evils to be apprehended from an opposite or dependent condition;—and it cannot be necessary to repeat what has been so recently stated.—It will not be supposed, on the one hand, that I am so foolish as to maintain that there may not be individuals of any established church chargeable with a very culpable want of diligence;—nor could the reader on the other hand, derive any satisfaction from a more particular examination of charges so generally laid as not to admit of being either proved or refuted,

But I have no wish, for that reason, to conceal

the argument of our opponents upon this point. In reference to the condition of a clergyman of the establishment in Great Britain and Ireland, it is said that "all the labour which the law can oblige him to perform may be accomplished in an hour or two each week, by any man who can read English ;" - - —and that "unless we are prepared to believe that clerical ordination, the mere *opus operatum* entirely alters the nature of man, and renders him a being of a different species from the rest of his brethren, we may be assured that an established clergyman will not, generally speaking, go far beyond what the law can enforce." \*—If the principle or ground of argument here laid down were once admitted, we should be equally bound to infer from "*the nature of man*," that so far as dissenting ministers are diligent in the discharge of their duty, it is only because they feel themselves dependent on the people to whom they minister. But I am far from imputing to them anything so base as what would be involved in this conclusion. Respecting the charge so broadly and indefinitely laid against the established clergy, the only qualified judges are that part of the public who submit to, and desire to profit by, the ministrations of a national or esta-

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, pp. 152, 3.

blished church ;—and to their award I most willingly leave the question at issue.

With still more confidence shall I decline making any reply to some more extraordinary and unexpected charges.

We are directed to look to “ those *Insensate Beings* who are now appearing in the pulpits of “ the establishments ;” \* we are told that an established clergy, “ as a body, are capable of almost “ any thing ;” † and we are gravely informed that, in the opinion of the writer, “ the *press* makes “ fewer infidels than the *pulpit*.” ‡

If I could, from the beginning, have condescended to anything so mean as an endeavour to accomplish my object by retorting *abuse*, this exemplification of it would certainly have deterred me from so vain an attempt.

Those objections against the *utility* of church establishments, to which I have replied, are all that, in my apprehension, call for an answer ;—and it is not without some confidence in the answer which has been given that I now approach the conclusion of the whole argument.

\* Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches, p. 33.

† Idem, p. 117.

‡ Idem, p. 118.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

I HAVE presented the different parts of the argument in that order, which I hoped would be most conducive to a just understanding and estimate of the whole. But our views of the case have proved so very miscellaneous, that some reflection, on the part of the reader, may be necessary, in order to his perceiving the combined force, with which they direct us to the same conclusion; and, for this reason, it may be useful that we now take a brief retrospect of what has been advanced.

My great object has been to vindicate that connection between church and state which is essential to an ecclesiastical establishment,—that interposition of civil power in what outwardly concerns the church, which contributes to its outward support and maintenance.

Now, in a case which so nearly concerns the service and honour of God, and the everlasting well-being of men, it was natural to look for some indications of the purpose and design of Heaven; and we have accordingly found such manifesta-



tions of the Divine counsel and will upon this subject, as it seems impossible to contemplate in all their connection and bearing, without admitting that ecclesiastical establishments have the sanction of Divine authority.

Keeping duly in mind that all the ways of God are consistent, we have looked back to the earliest dispensation of Divine grace—to the condition of the visible church under the patriarchal dispensation,—in the hope of tracing, even at that period, some of the first elements of an ecclesiastical establishment;—and, considering how brief are the notices which the Scriptures afford of what passed at that early age, we have certainly found more than could well have been anticipated. We have seen that, in the person of one individual (Melchisedek) the office of priest of the Most High God was combined with that of a king or an earthly potentate,—a strong presumption (to say the least) that the power with which he was invested, as a king, would not fail to be exercised, as it should become necessary, for the accomplishment of the objects of his priesthood.—We have also seen that, even at the same early period, tenths or tithes of men's increase or acquisitions were, in some cases, consecrated to the service of the Divine Being,—and, in one case, were certainly paid to that priest of the Most High God, whose priestly office we are

directed to regard as a type of the priesthood of Christ.

An examination of the Mosaic economy has enabled us to ascertain that its provisions were strictly conformable in their import to what had been more or less recognised under the patriarchal dispensation. As a contrast to the earlier case, the enactments of the Mosaic law, and the history of the Israelitish nation are extremely minute. But, while they supply all that was wanting in our information, respecting the counsel and will of God, under the patriarchal system, they do not, in a single point, contravene the information and evidence which it had afforded us. We find that the authority of kings and other potentates was exercised in all its vigour for the support of the visible church of God, and exercised in a way which entitles us to regard their conduct as an example to others. The payment of tithes, also, to the ministers of religion was unequivocally required,—not for their occasional accommodation merely, but for their regular and continued support.

We have found, after strict examination, that what was thus sanctioned, under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, was not abrogated by Christ. The prophecies in the Old Testament, concerning the Messiah and his church upon earth,

had distinctly intimated that, after an ineffectual opposition to the establishment of his spiritual kingdom, the potentates of this world should be brought to serve and honour him, to present to him gifts, and fall down before him, and that kings in particular should become the nursing fathers of the Christian church. These prophecies were, in their due time, fulfilled ; and the Christian world were encouraged to regard their fulfilment as a pledge of the continued aid and support of earthly rulers in all that outwardly concerns the interests of Christ's spiritual kingdom. The new Testament directs us to regard kings and other rulers as still deriving their authority from God,—their power as an “ ordinance of God,” and themselves as “ ministers of God to us for good.” We are, accordingly, directed to pray for such rulers, in order to our being enabled, through them, to “ lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,”—evidently by means of their aid towards upholding those ministrations which are conducive to the advancement of “ godliness and honesty.” And we have clearly seen that, without the aid of the state or the civil government for enforcing some of the laws of God, the condition of civil society might soon wear an aspect which would bring into question even our Christian name ;—we have seen that, without that aid

of the civil magistrate, which the opponents of church establishments disclaim, we could have no security against such a gross profanation of the Sabbath as it is too painful to anticipate.

It has, notwithstanding, been alleged that there are strong reasons against supposing it possible that ecclesiastical establishments have the sanction and approbation of God.

It has been asked in what way, consistently with such a supposition, we are to account for the fact—that there was no ecclesiastical establishment for 300 years after Christ's ascension to Heaven. Our answer has been that there were no kings or other rulers, who had at that time embraced the Christian faith ;—and though, by the power of Divine grace they might have been earlier induced to receive and obey the Gospel, we have found cause to regard it as having been eminently conducive to the permanent establishment of the faith of Christ, that God was pleased, in the first instance, to present a striking example of the vanity of all that man could do in opposition to it, by allowing the powers of the world, for no short period, to combine for its overthrow.

In these circumstances, we have seen it equally vain to object that there is no *precept* of the New

Testament, under which ecclesiastical establishments are expressly required or enjoined. It is plain that, for the space of 300 years, such a precept could not have been obeyed by the Christian world ; and it seems perfectly consistent with the ways of God that, in such a case, the men of other generations should be left to ascertain his counsel and will by such investigation as we have actually employed for that purpose.

It has been strongly objected that Christ himself declared that his " kingdom is not of this " world." But we have seen, from the circumstances in which this declaration was made, that its immediate purpose was nothing more than a disavowal by Christ of all pretensions to such temporal authority, as could absolve the Jews from their obligation of allegiance to Cæsar as their earthly sovereign. It is not, indeed, the less true, that the kingdom of Christ is exclusively spiritual, and that it is also independent. But it does by no means follow, either that its interests cannot be affected by things which are temporal and worldly ; or that it may not derive advantage from the interposition of an earthly government for the regulation of such worldly things as concern it.

It has been said that the civil government of a country is not competent to define and settle the religious creed which ought to be preferred and

sanctioned. But it is altogether a mistake to suppose that the rulers of any state are called to *devise* a scheme of either doctrine or worship; they are only called to judge between competing claims;—and, without their entering into any technical discussions, their own observation and experience, together with the means which they have of ascertaining to what religious class the great body of the community are most inclined, are quite sufficient for enabling them to form a right and satisfactory judgment. It is true that, as fallible men, they are liable to err; but, were this to be sustained as an objection, it would operate equally against all the trust that is reposed in the ministers of religion, who, in common with others, are certainly fallible.

Supposing the religion of a government to be materially different from that of the majority of its subjects, it has been asked whether the creed of the government or that of the people ought to be established. But, in whatever way such a singular case be determined, it cannot affect other and ordinary cases, or any case in which we are practically interested.

It has been said that, if it be the duty of Protestant governments to establish Protestantism, it must also be the duty of Popish, Mahometan, or Pagan governments to establish the faith and

worship which they respectively profess and acknowledge. But, if Popish, or Mahometan, or Pagan governments are to be disapproved by us for establishing what they both profess, and *believe to be true*, the only ground of our disapprobation must be that *we know it to be false*; and, surely, this cannot be a reason why we should disapprove another government for establishing what *we know to be true*.

Above all, it has been contended that no particular scheme or system of religion ought to be supported at the public expense.

Now, in answer to this objection, we have seen that *tithes* in particular cannot be reasonably complained of as a burden to any man,—and that what is farther exacted for the support of the church, from the proprietors of lands and houses, is either a burden to which they have voluntarily subjected themselves, or one to which they have been subjected by those from whom alone they have derived their property.

But, however small be the burden to which Dissenters in particular can be otherwise liable for maintaining ecclesiastical establishments, it is said that the exaction of *any thing* from them, for such a purpose, is antisciptural, unjust, and a violation of the rights of conscience.

On the contrary, we have seen that the Scrip-

tures do not in any way decide the question,—that the exaction complained of is no more unjust than many other exactions which, for the public good, every government must, of necessity, enforce against men who have no individual interest in the purpose to be served by them,—and that an enlightened conscience cannot upbraid any man for submitting to such an exaction, when he considers that the Apostle Paul cheerfully submitted to pay taxes, which he knew were to be partly applied for maintaining the established superstitions of the Roman empire.

After disposing of such objections against our regarding ecclesiastical establishments as sanctioned by Divine authority, we have considered the expediency and utility of such establishments.

We have seen that, under the Emperor *Constantine* and his immediate successors, the interposition of civil power, in aid of the church, was of much importance towards the propagation of the Gospel,—and that, though the protection of the state may have been so *abused and perverted*, during the dark ages, as to combine with other causes in producing much evil, the countenance and aid of civil governments were also eminently instrumental, at the era of the Reformation, for the re-esta-



blishment of pure and undefiled religion in many of the countries of Europe.

We have seen that, in a widely extended community, an established church is essential for communicating the benefit of religious ministrations to the whole body of the people, in any thing like an equal degree, or in the degree which is indispensable to their spiritual interest,—and that the outward independence, which the ministers of religion derive from an establishment, is conducive to an independent discharge of duty,—consequently conducive to our security that the doctrine which they preach will not be accommodated to the *wishes* instead of the *wants* of men.

We have also seen that the support which an ecclesiastical establishment affords to the ministrations of religion is eminently conducive to the well-being of civil society,—that such an establishment even tends to consecrate the state,—that, when the rulers of a state, and the people over whom they rule, profess the same faith and engage in the same exercises of religious worship, it tends to unite their hearts in one bond of holy and brotherly affection.

On the other hand, we have found that the *objections* urged against the utility of ecclesiastical establishments will not bear examination.—The

charge against the clergy of the Scottish establishment, in particular, as unqualified for their functions in respect of education, has been proved unjust in such a degree as leads to a very opposite conclusion. In reference to the *doctrine* also, which is preached in the pulpits of an established church, we have seen that the subscription, which is required, of its standards affords the best security that the nature of the case admits;—and though, in every established church, and at every period, there may have been false teachers, it is not less true that dissenting churches have had their own share of them.—Even a deficiency in professional diligence, as imputed to the ministers of an established church,—however much to be lamented wherever it exists—we have seen to be an evil which must be considered in a *comparative* view. So far as it results from any thing in the nature of an establishment, it must be a consequence of the clergy being independent of the people to whom they minister;—and, considering the greater evils which, for the reasons I have assigned, may be too naturally apprehended from an opposite and dependent condition of the clergy,—the utmost amount of unfavourable conclusion, at which we can arrive, is that there is no *perfection* in human things,—that there is some imperfection

even in the principle and tendency of ecclesiastical establishments, and that our decision in their favour must, in consequence, depend upon a just estimate of their preponderating and *indispensable* advantages.

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The reader can scarcely fail to perceive that the preceding argument, of which I have thus traced an outline, presents, in support of ecclesiastical establishments, such an *accumulation* of evidence, as we should look for in vain in reference to most other cases about which men have been divided in opinion. In some departments of the argument, even separately considered, the evidence appears to me to be decisive of the question at issue; and in what way, or upon what grounds, the combined force of the whole can be fairly resisted, I am altogether at a loss to discover.

I have felt indeed that it was not enough to state the evidence, however decisive in itself, without adverting to some publications on the opposite side,—because it seemed to me that their authors had made the most of a bad cause, and that some minds might be thereby deceived. I have therefore endeavoured fairly to meet their argument;

and, for ensuring myself against any hazard of misrepresenting it, I have referred to their own words, both more frequently and more largely, than to some of my readers may seem to have been necessary.

Perhaps I have, notwithstanding, left out of view some of their facts or their reasoning, which to themselves appear important ; but, of all these, their cause has, in consequence, the full advantage, so far as I am concerned.

It is, indeed, no more than fair to state that I am far from pretending to have read all that has been *very recently* published, in opposition to ecclesiastical establishments. I have met the argument nearly if not altogether as it stood a few months ago, when I began to write ;—and I have some ground to believe that there has not, from that time, been a very material change of its aspect.

I am at the same time aware that, even since some of these sheets were in the press, there have been publications, proceeding from respectable individuals, in *support* of ecclesiastical establishments, which my other engagements have hitherto put it out of my power to peruse. But, supposing that there may be some coincidence in our respective arguments, that coincidence cannot be

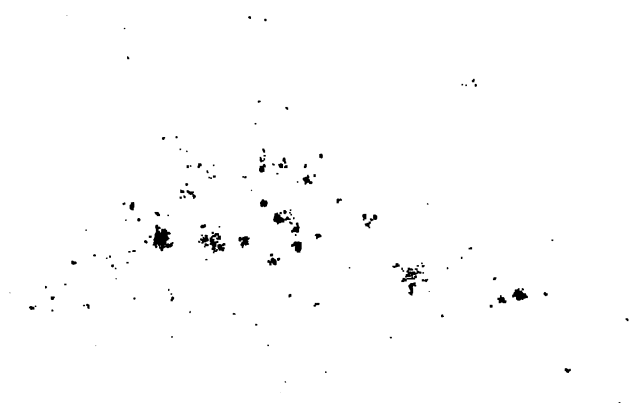
such as to supersede the importance of the case having been stated by each of us in his own way.

I therefore commit what I have written to the public eye, in the hope that it may do good, and with an assurance that it is intended for good.

THE END.

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